TOM KING PETER GROSS TAMRA BONVILLAIN

ANIMAL POUND™

"This is heartbreaking and immersive reading."
—STEPHEN KING

ANIMAL POUND™

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Written in 1944, when England was partnered with the USSR in World War II and the British Communist Party was on the rise, *Animal Farm* was an allegory for how the ideal utopias of communism could rot into the cruel realities of fascism: the people's revolution would one day destroy the people. It was Orwell's warning to his fellow travelers: look at what has been sown; look at what we will one day reap.

Eighty years later, *Animal Farm* is a classic embedded in the consciousness of the Western World. It is, however, not the urgently relevant warning it once was. For today's threat of fascism doesn't come from perverting the ideals of the left looking forward, but from con artists warping the ideals of the right looking back. And the tools of these corrupt actors are not revolution from outside the state, but the exploitation of the norms already sanctified within the state. As such, it is time to build upon Orwell's work, to construct a new allegory for the horror that faces us now—just as Orwell addressed his own era

and not the problems of the 1860s. It's time to revisit the animals and see what new hell awaits.

What Orwell did with farm animals in the country we will try to do with pound animals in the city. Where he had pigs and horses and sheep, we will use dogs and cats and rabbits to tell our story of the rise of a new threat to freedom and equality.

Animal Pound is an updating of Orwell's masterpiece. It is a series to be put in the hands of every reader in the country, a book meant to be assigned in classrooms and inspire essays and interpretations. This is a series to cause conversation, to be in every book and comic store for thousands of people to argue over and to love. But most of all, this is a series that will talk about our time as Orwell talked about his. We need the past to guide us, but not to own us. We too can create masterpieces.

Tom King
Washington, D.C.

CHAPTER
ONE

The Proud Dog Dies

THERE, HE COMES **NOW.**
IT'S **TIME** THEN.
Mr. Jones, of the Manfield Pound, had locked the cat cages for the evening, but was too drunk to notice a small hole in the upper wall.
M
MAYBE I **SHOULDN'T** HAVE TOLD YOU.
I WOULDN'T WANT TO KNOW.
BUT ISN'T THAT **JUST** LIKE ME, I'M SURE YOU'LL SAY.
NOT **BIG** AND **BRAVE** LIKE YOU AND YOURS.
NO, A SILLY **KITTEN,** SMALL AND GENTLE AND TIMID.
IS **THAT** WHY I WILL MISS YOU SO?
Jones usually drank himself numb on Wednesday nights. Though he loved his work, there were some tasks he preferred over others.
OR WILL **YOU** MISS ME, TOO?
LUCKY

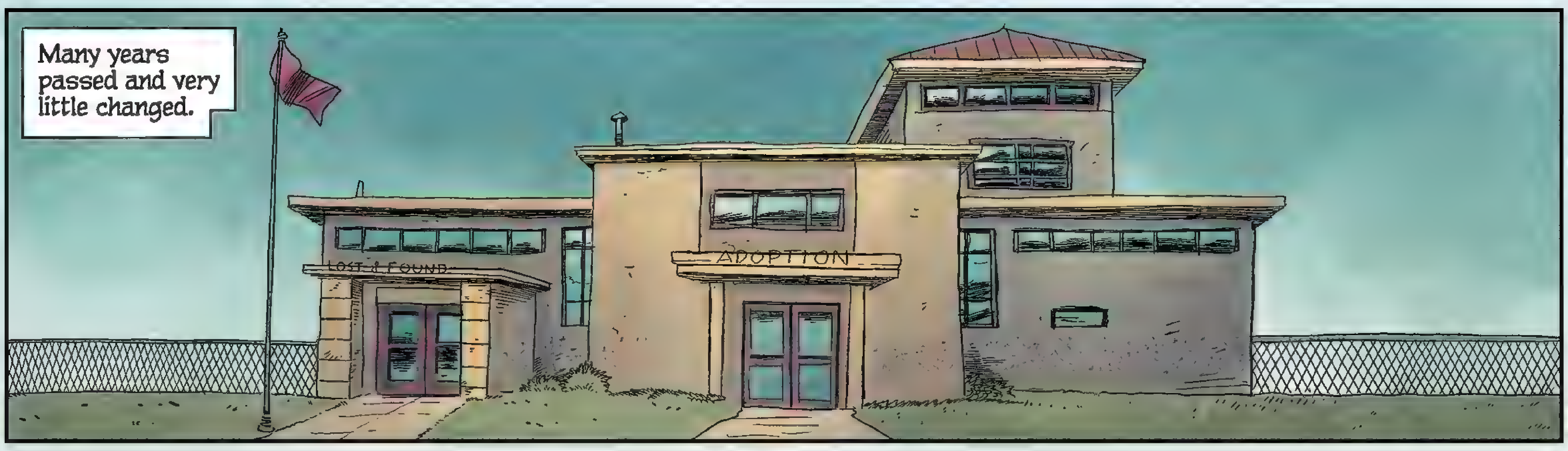
I HAVE BEEN *THINKING* ON IT FOR A WHILE NOW.
I HAVE A MESSAGE, *FIFI.*
I WOULD LIKE TO *GIVE* IT TO YOU TO PASS ON TO *YOUR* KIND. AND, IN TIME, TO *MY* KIND AS WELL.
HM. NOW YOU ARE THE *SILLY* PET, *GOOD DOG.*
WHO WOULD LISTEN TO *ME?*
CATS ARE *UNPREDICTABLE,* NOT LIKE US. PERHAPS, THOUGH YOU ARE *FEEBLE,* YOU WILL BE HEARD.
MY LIFE HAS BEEN *LONG.* I HAVE SEEN *STRANGER* THINGS.
AT TIMES WE *ALL* FOLLOW OUR *TAILS.* WHO IS TO SAY *WHERE* THEY MIGHT *LEAD* US.
LUCKY, HE IS LEAVING *OUR* ROOM NOW.
THEY LOVE THEIR *SCHEDULE,* THESE *MEN.*
THEY *DO.*
NOW PLEASE, YOUNG ONE, *HEAR* ME, FOR SOON I SHALL SPEAK *NO* MORE.

DOGS
CATS
"A DOG'S LIFE IS ONE OF *SERVICE*, A CAT'S ONE OF *LEISURE*.
"WE HAVE *BOTH* RESENTED THE OTHER FOR OUR *DIFFERENCES*.
DOGS
CATS
"AND *ENSCONCED* IN THIS RESENTMENT, WE HAVE IGNORED OUR *GREAT* SIMILARITY.
"THAT WHICH *BINDS* US TOGETHER BEYOND OUR *FOUR* PAWS AND OUR HUNGER FOR FISH AND FOWL.
"NEITHER OF US ARE *FREE*.
"WE ARE *PETS*. BRED, BORN, RAISED, AND MURDERED AT THE WHIM OF *MAN*.
"THEY *FEED* US, THEY *BATHE* US, THEY *EXERCISE* US.
"AND WHEN IT DOESN'T *SUIT* THEM, THEY RIP OUR CHILDREN FROM US AND *SNIP* OFF OUR PRIVATES.
"IN RETURN FOR THIS *GRACIOUSNESS*, THEY ASK FOR *ONE* THING.
CLIK
"OUR ETERNAL *LOVE*.
"*THUS* WE SPEND OUR LIVES, CATS *AND* DOGS ALIKE, UNDERFOOT OF OUR *MASTERS*.
"THEY *SCRATCH* AT OUR EARS AS WE STARE *ADORINGLY* UP AT THEM AND TELL THEM THEY'RE *WONDERFUL*.
"THEN THEY WALK AWAY AND *TRY* TO REMEMBER TO REFILL OUR *WATER BOWL*."

"I CANNOT **LIE. I** WAS ONCE **CONTENT** WITH THAT LIFE.
"I **VERY** MUCH ENJOYED HAVING MY SNOUT **SCRITCHED** AND MY BELLY **RUBBED** AND MY SCRAPS **DROPPED** HEAVILY FROM THE TABLE.
"THEY MADE MY TAIL **WAG** MOST PLEASANTLY.
"AND THEN I CAME **HERE.**
CLIK
"THE DETAILS OF WHY ARE **IRRELEVANT.** ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT IN THE **END,** HERE I SAT.
"AND THIS PLACE WITH ITS **CRUELTIES,** ITS **EMPTY** BOWLS AND **STOOL-**STAINED CONCRETE.
"WHERE OUR LIVES, CATS AND DOGS AND RABBITS, **ALL** OF THEM DEPEND ON A MAN TAKING **PITY** ON YOU.
"HERE, IN THIS **POUND,** MY EYES WERE FINALLY WRENCHED **OPEN.**
"ALL OF MAN AND PET IS **DISTILLED** TO ITS ESSENCE IN THE CAGE.
"THERE IS NO **LOVE** OR **LOYALTY.** NO TREATS. NO **KINDNESS.**
"IT IS **THEIR** RULE AND **OUR** FOLLY.
"IN THIS **HELL,** I FINALLY LEARNED A PAT ON THE HEAD IS **GOOD.**
"BUT IT IS FINER TO BE THE ONE **GIVING** THE PAT THAN THE ONE **RECEIVING.**
"FOR THE ONE GIVING CAN CHOOSE TO **STOP,** AND THE ONE RECEIVING CAN ONLY **BEG** FOR MORE.
"WE ARE BORN **FREE,** MY KITTEN.
"I REMEMBER MY **PUPS,** REMEMBER THE DAYS OF THEM AT THEIR MOTHER'S **TEATS,** THEM BOUNCING ABOUT **DESPERATE** TO LEARN THE HUNT AND BITE.
"AND I REMEMBER THE DAY THE MAN PUT HIS **LEASH** ON THEM. AND PULLED THEM AWAY AND **CLOSED** THE DOORS."
NO PETTING!

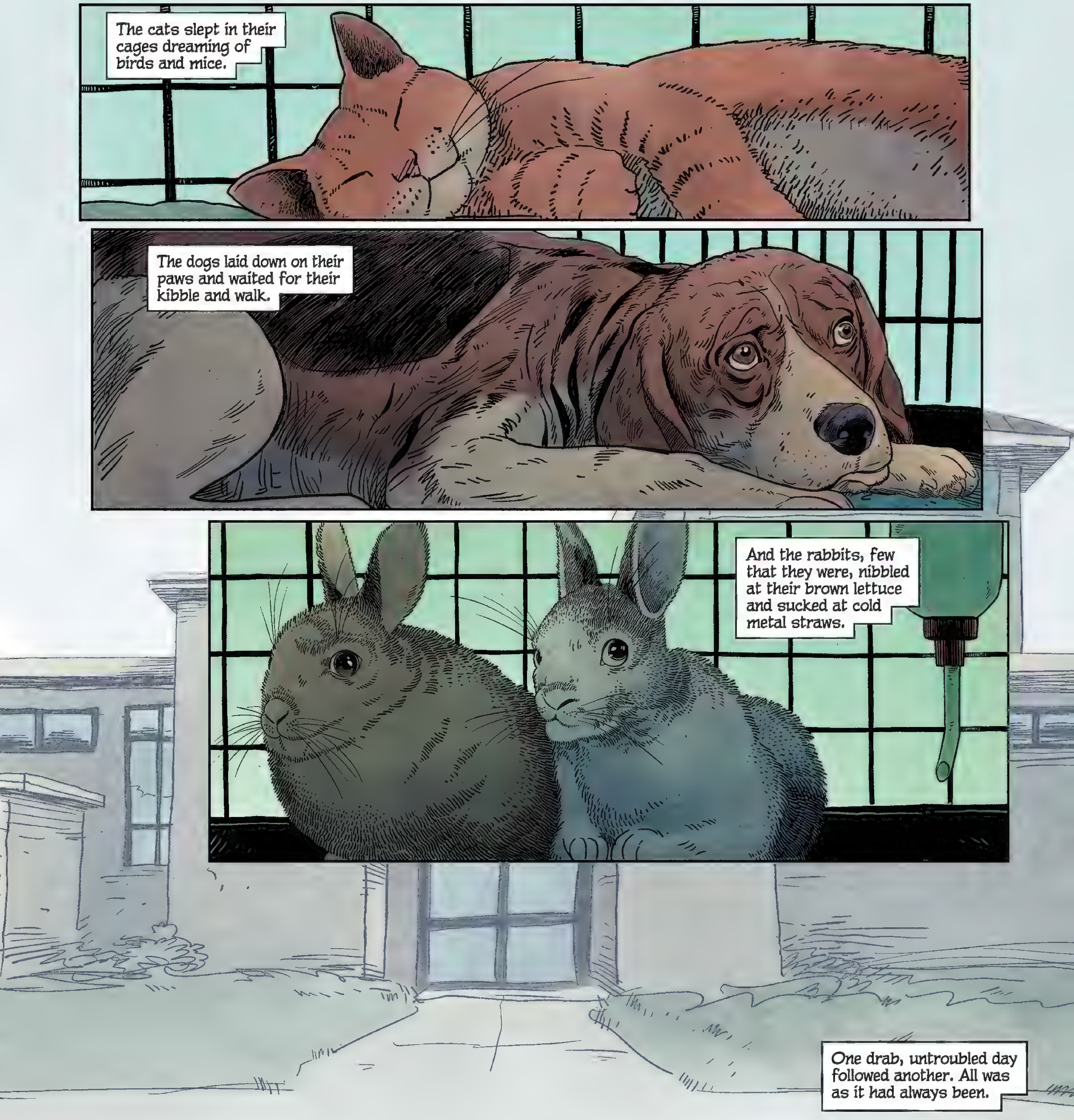
"THE DOORS YOU SEE, THE *DOORS.*
"*THAT* IS OUR BURDEN. THAT IS MAN'S TRUE *GIFT* TO US.
"DOORS TO *CONTAIN* US, DOORS TO *SEPARATE* US, DOORS TO *CONTROL* US.
"WE SPEND OUR ENTIRE LIFETIME *STARING* AT THE DOOR, *SCRATCHING* AT THE DOOR, *HOWLING* AT THE DOOR.
"PATHETICALLY *PRAYING* FOR SOMEONE TO PLEASE, *PLEASE* OPEN IT FOR US.
"AND WHEN THEY DO *DEEM* THAT WE ARE READY, WE JUMP AND WAIL FOR JOY.
"THEY'VE COME *HOME!* WE CAN GO *OUTSIDE!* THEY'RE GOING TO *FEED* ME!
"WE *SQUEAL* GLEEFULLY, NEVER REALIZING THAT WE ARE CELEBRATING OUR OWN *IMPOTENCE.*
"FOR *THAT* IS ALL MAN HAS OVER US.
"HE IS NOT *STRONGER* OR *FASTER* OR *FIERCER* OR *SMARTER.*
"HE IS JUST A *THING* THAT CAN USE A *KEY* AND TURN A *KNOB* AND *PUSH.*
"ON A *DOOR.*"

"MY DAY IS *DONE*, MY WALK IS *THROUGH*.
"I WILL *NEVER* OPEN MY OWN DOOR.
DOGS
"BUT I SAY *THIS*, I SAY THIS TO *YOU* WITH ALL THE *CONFIDENCE* OF MY SPECIES.
"A DAY *WILL* COME WHEN *YOU* WILL OPEN YOUR DOOR, WHEN *ALL* CATS AND DOGS WILL OPEN *ALL* OF OUR DOORS.
"MAN HAS *SEPARATED* US, KITTEN, *PITTED* US AGAINST ONE ANOTHER IN THE HOPE THAT WE NEVER REALIZE THIS *POWER*.
CATS
"BUT WE WILL SOMEDAY *UNITE*, AND WE WILL SOMEDAY *OVERTHROW* THEIR TYRANNY, AND WE WILL *SOMEDAY* FIND OUR WAY BACK TO *LIBERTY*.
"HOW DO I KNOW *THIS?* BECAUSE WHEN I LOOK AT *YOU*, I DO NOT SEE A *CAT*.
"I SEE ONLY AN ANIMAL, AN *EQUAL*, AS EQUALLY *TRAPPED* AS I AM.
"AND SOMEDAY *ALL* ANIMALS WILL SEE EACH OTHER THIS WAY.
"THEY WILL SEE THAT WE ARE *GRACED* WITH FREEDOM JUST AS SURELY AS WE ARE THEN *ROBBED* OF IT.
"THAT THE *FOOLISHNESS* THAT SEGREGATES US CANNOT ETERNALLY *VEIL* THE TRANSCENDENT *BEAUTY* THAT UNITES US.
"WHEN THAT DAY COMES, WHEN WE RECOGNIZE IN EACH OTHER TRUE *EQUALITY*, WE WILL NOT ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE *RULED*.
"FOR A *DOG* WHO KNOWS HE'S AS GOOD AS ANY *CAT*, AND A *CAT* WHO KNOWS HE'S AS GOOD AS ANY *DOG*, CANNOT THEN FATHOM THAT THEY MUST BOW TO ANY *MAN*.
"WE WILL COME *TOGETHER*, I SWEAR IT.
"WE WILL BREED AND FEED AND LOVE BASED ON OUR *OWN* NEEDS, OUR *OWN* WAYS.
CLIK
"WE WILL NO LONGER BE *CAT* AND *DOG*.
"WE WILL BE MERELY *BEASTS*, CONTENT AND FREE.
ANIMAL DISPOSAL
"SOON, MY KITTEN, SOON WE WILL THROW OFF OUR *LEASHES*.
"WE WILL *OPEN* OUR *DOORS*."


Many years passed and very little changed.
LOST & FOUND
ADOPTION

Lucky's call to unite the animals against their oppressors was heard only by one insignificant kitten.

It was forgotten as soon as she saw a line of string being dragged this way and that.


The cats slept in their cages dreaming of birds and mice.
The dogs laid down on their paws and waited for their kibble and walk.
And the rabbits, few that they were, nibbled at their brown lettuce and sucked at cold metal straws.
One drab, untroubled day followed another. All was as it had always been.

Or so it seemed.
IT MUST BE TOMORROW.
OR ELSE YOU WILL HAVE TO FIND YOURSELF SOME OTHER CANINE STUPID ENOUGH TO LISTEN TO A BUNCH OF IGNORANT MEWERS.
YOU ASK ME TO SAVE YOUR NECK IN THE SAME BREATH YOU INSULT ME.
AND HERE I THOUGHT YOUR KIND WERE KNOWN FOR BEING SO FRIENDLY.
DID I ASK YOU FOR THIS, FIFI?
IF YOU DON'T NEED OUR STRENGTH, LET US DIE.
IT IS MADAME FIFI, MY GOOD DOG TITAN.
AND NO ONE IS STRONG WHO CANNOT OPEN A DOOR.
TOMORROW IT MUST BE; TOMORROW IT SHALL BE. REMEMBER LUCKY.
YES.
REMEMBER LUCKY.
RRRRRR

Once a day, usually in the afternoons, some of the cats were taken across the hallway from their cages into a play area.
For a few hours, they were allowed to exercise and socialize.
To scratch. To lounge. To climb.
To plan.
COME TO ME, MY *WILD* ONES, PUT AWAY YOUR CLAWS AND SQUEAKS.
PLEASE HEAR AND *PLEASE* LISTEN.
TITAN, A GOOD DOG WHO REMEMBERS *LUCKY,* HAS BEEN PASSED AND IS NOW *SCHEDULED.*
HIS *NEEDLE* HAS BEEN PREPARED. *TOMORROW* THE MAN WILL COME FOR HIM.
BUT *WE* WILL OPEN HIS *DOOR.*

AND HE WILL CHOMP DOWN ON OUR FINE BONES AND HAVE A LAST MEAL BEFORE THE MAN CARRIES HIM AWAY TO THE FIRE.
As was customary at such gatherings, there were periodic interruptions.
RAVEN IS OLDER THAN EVEN I AND WISER THAN ANY OF US HERE, AND HE WELL KNOWS THE DANGER OF THE DOGS.
JUST AS HE ALSO WELL KNOWS IT IS OUR FEAR OF THIS DANGER THAT HAS KEPT US PENNED.
HM. FEAR KEEPS A CAT ALIVE.
FEAR IS OUR FIRST FRIEND, BEFORE EVEN MILK.
I DO NOT APOLOGIZE FOR LOVING HER.
FEAR SERVES HER MASTER AND DEMANDS WE DO THE SAME.
FREEDOM ON THE OTHER HAND SERVES NO ONE AND DEMANDS NOTHING OF US.
AND WHAT CAT IN THIS ROOM OR OUT PREFERS TO FOLLOW DEMANDS OVER DOING NOTHING?
REMEMBER LUCKY!
I DO, MY DARLING GEORGIA, I REMEMBER HIM WELL.
I HEAR IT TODAY STILL, HIS WORDS THAT ALL ANIMALS ARE UNIFIED IN THEIR QUEST FOR LIBERTY.
AND AFTER TOMORROW, THE MEN WILL REMEMBER LUCKY. AND THEY WILL REMEMBER YOU. AND US. ALL OF US.
FOREVER.

REMEMBER LUCKY!
REMEMBER LUCKY!

As the cries came strong and true, Raven stretched out his legs and tail, cleaning the aches that cleverly hid there.

Unlike the others, he actually did remember Lucky, had seen the old dog from the window lumbering outside on his leash.

Lucky seemed to him to be like all the others: to sit and shake and roll over as they all perpetually did.

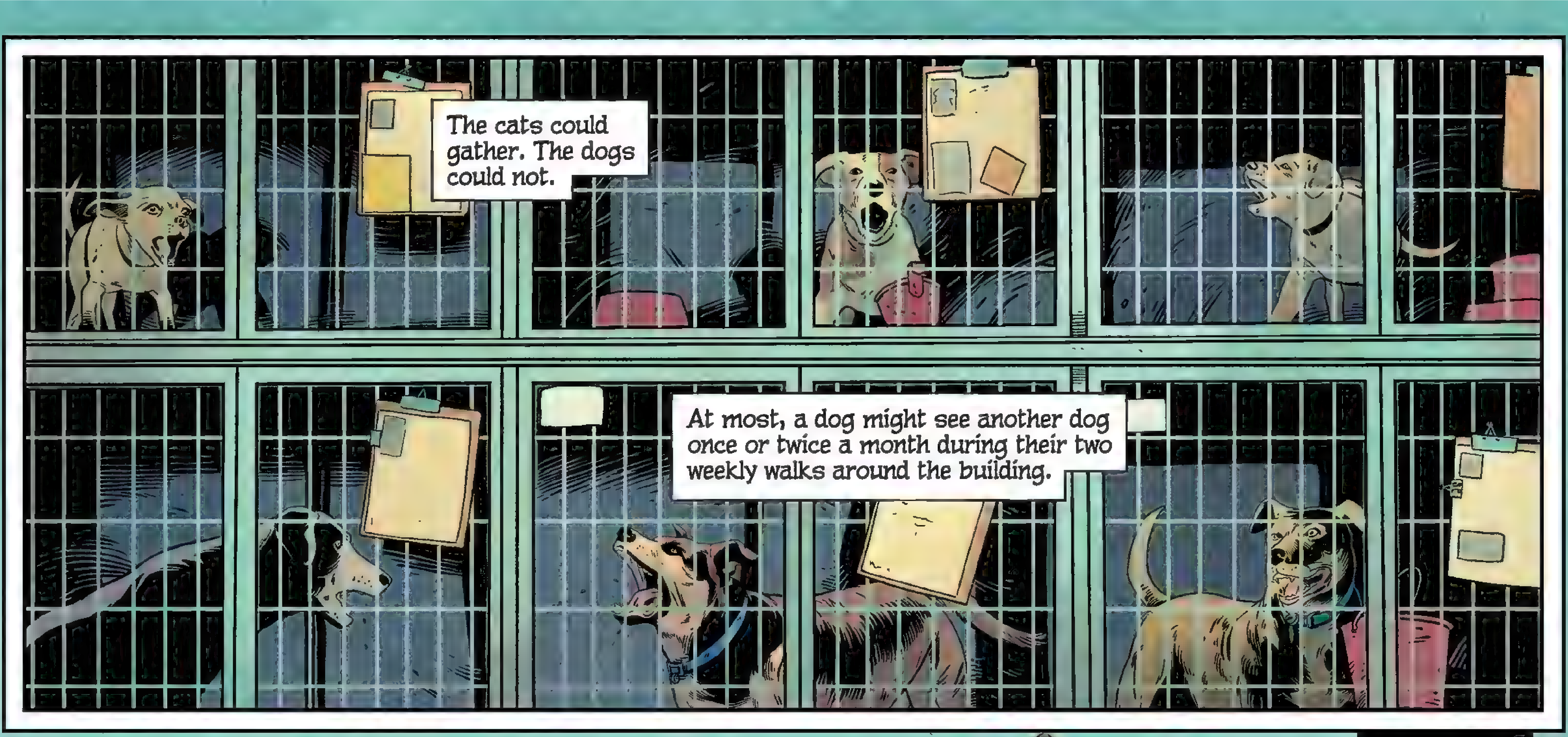
Another happy, loyal idiot with his tongue hanging out, trotting along, looking for prey and finding only piss.

REMEMBER LUCKY!
REMEMBER LUCKY!

Raven tucked himself into his tunnel and felt the sly itch of his coiling spine as his tail tickled his paw.

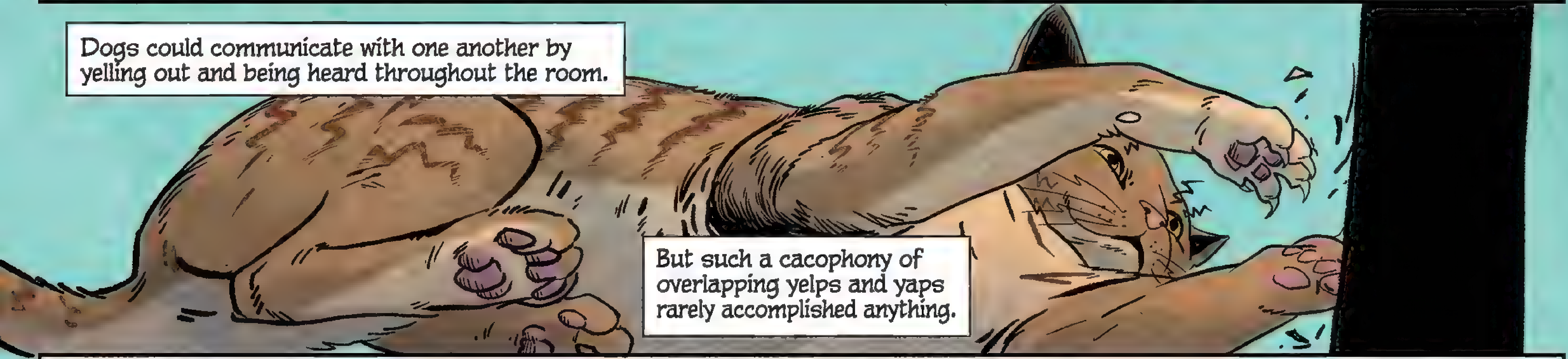
It is hard to be old, he thought. But it was never easy being young either.

REMEMBER LUCKY!



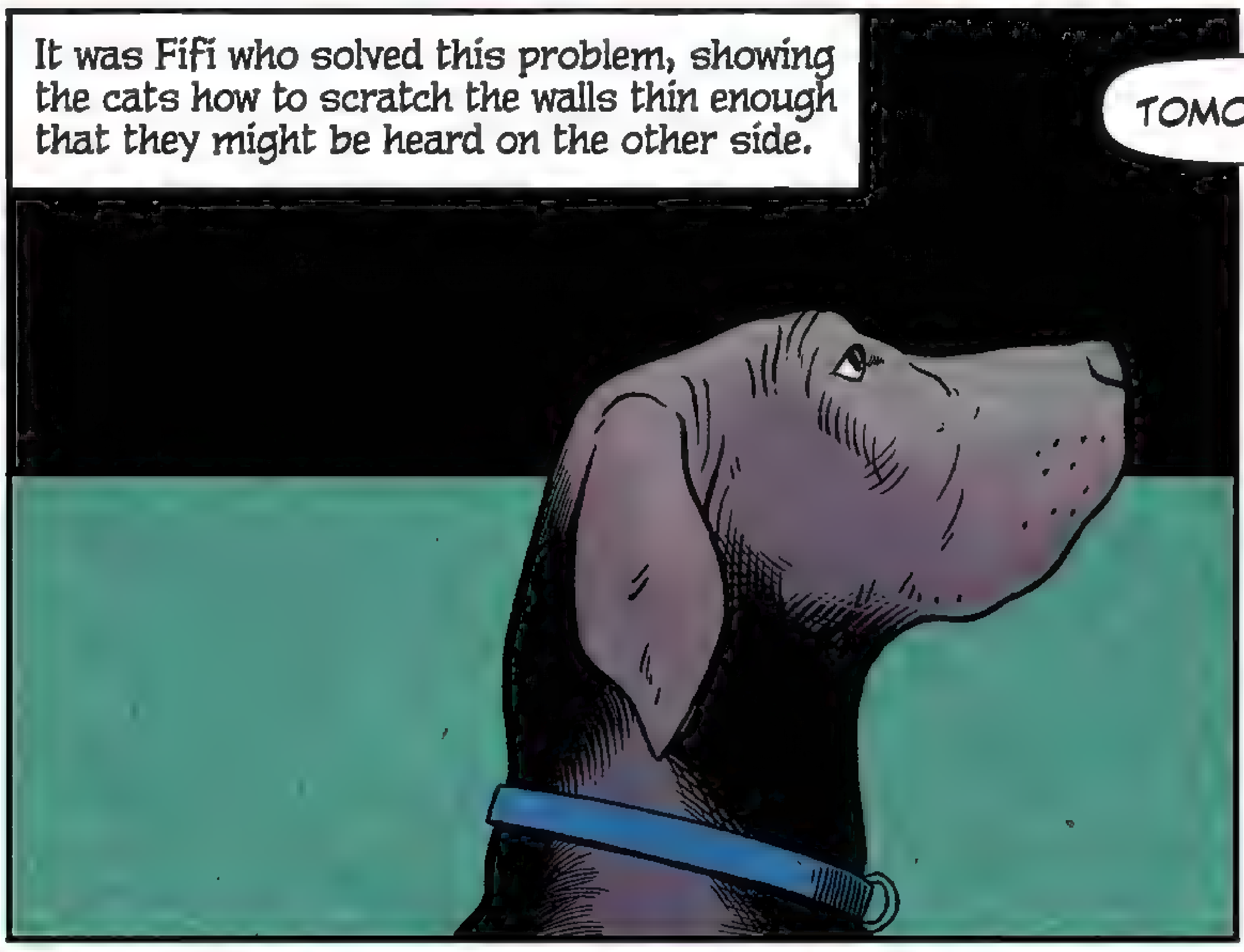
The cats could gather. The dogs could not.

At most, a dog might see another dog once or twice a month during their two weekly walks around the building.

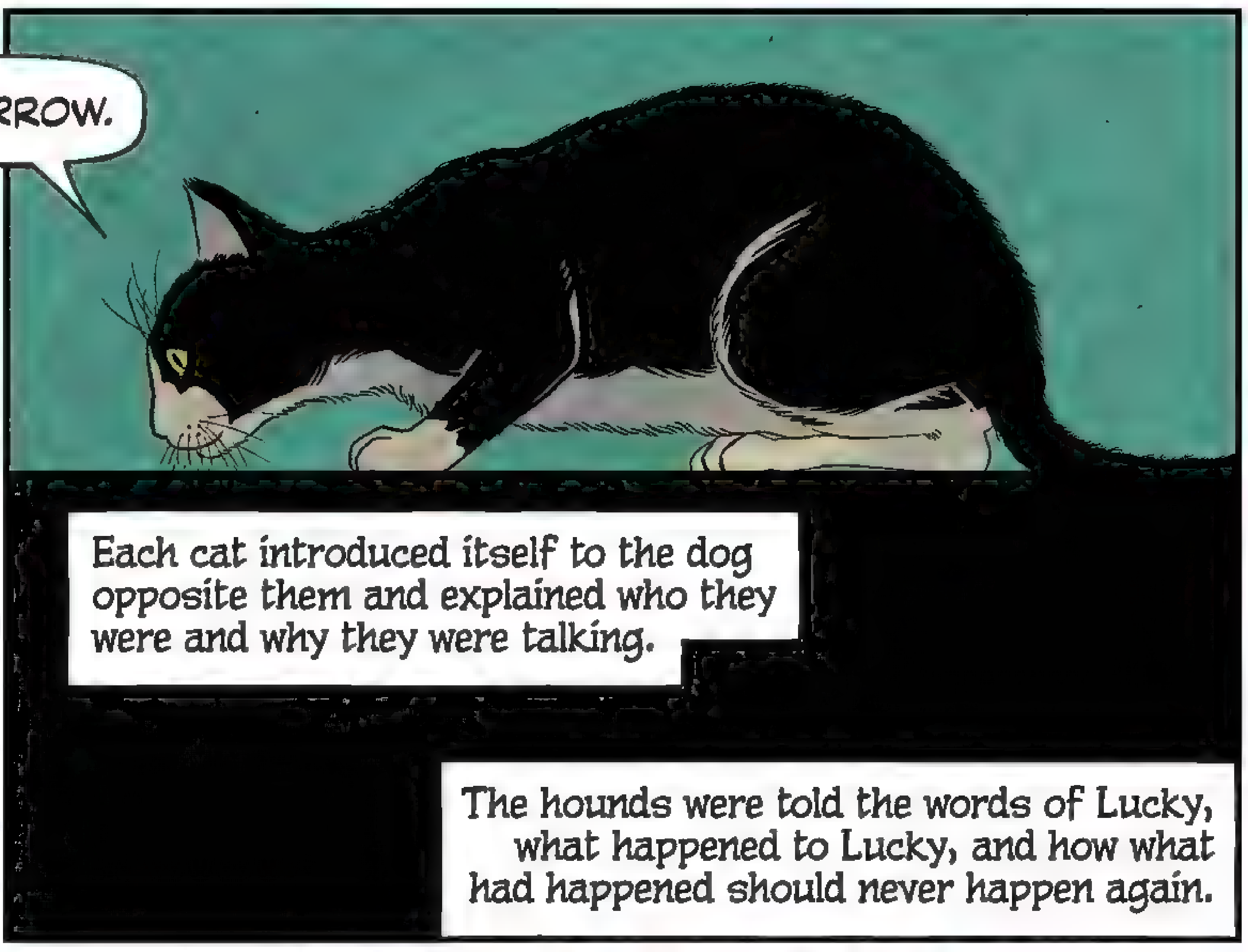


Dogs could communicate with one another by yelling out and being heard throughout the room.

But such a cacophony of overlapping yelps and yaps rarely accomplished anything.

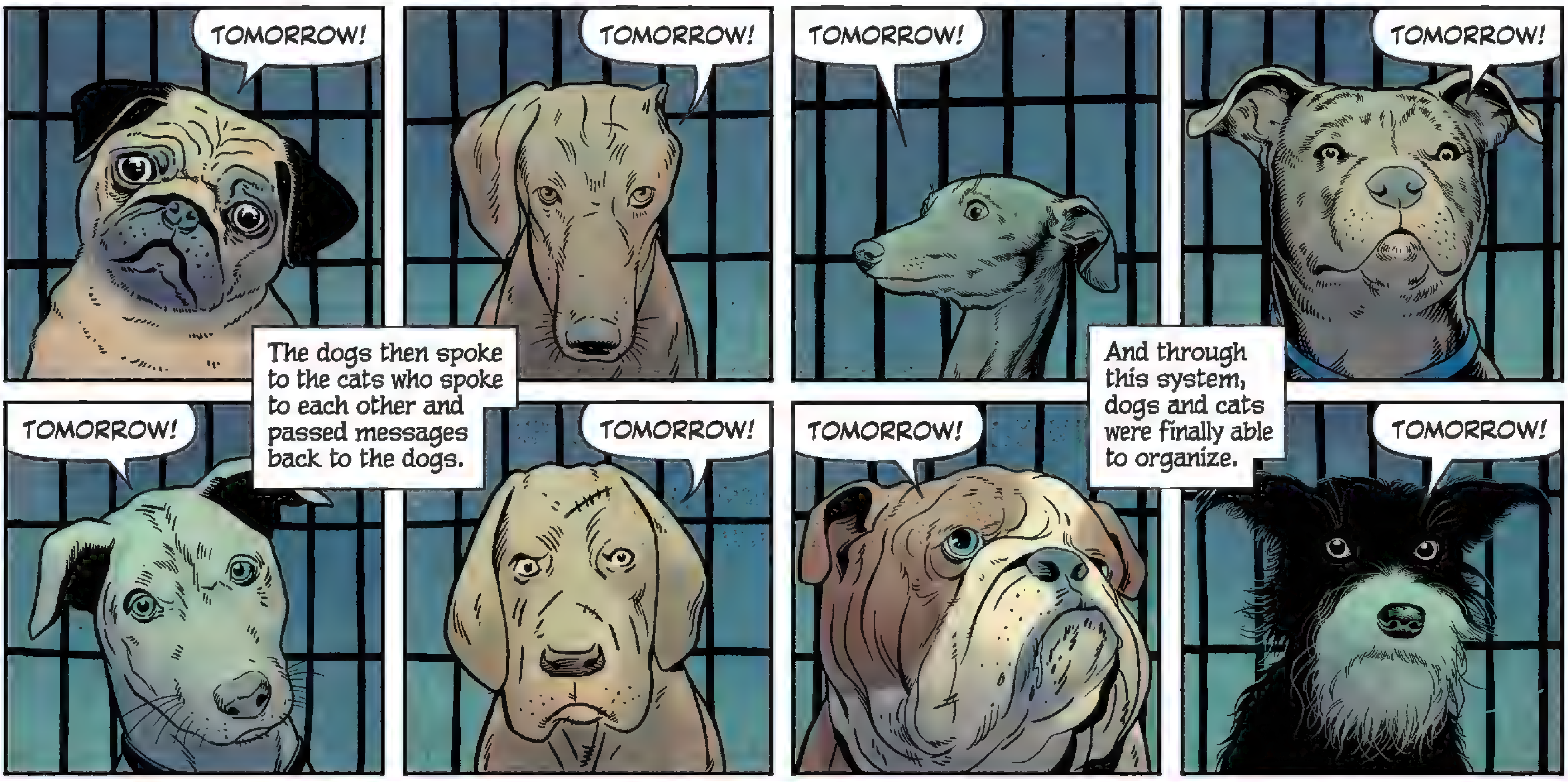


It was Fifi who solved this problem, showing the cats how to scratch the walls thin enough that they might be heard on the other side.



Each cat introduced itself to the dog opposite them and explained who they were and why they were talking.

The hounds were told the words of Lucky, what happened to Lucky, and how what had happened should never happen again.



TOMORROW!
TOMORROW!
TOMORROW!
TOMORROW!

The dogs then spoke to the cats who spoke to each other and passed messages back to the dogs.

TOMORROW!
TOMORROW!
TOMORROW!
TOMORROW!

And through this system, dogs and cats were finally able to organize.

Late that night, Titan paced in his cage.
It was the first time in his memory that he had no hunger for food, and his bowl overflowed with kibble.
WE SHOULD GO OVER IT AGAIN.
TITAN
NO PETTIN
WHAT...
THE PLAN, FIFI.
IT MUST BE REVIEWED AND NOT FORGOTTEN, IT MUST GO WELL.
THE TRICK IS NEW, BUT YOU ARE NOT OLD. THEY KILL YOU NOT FOR YOUR AGE, BUT FOR YOUR ORNERY BITE.
YOU WILL DO FINE. LET ME SLEEP.
BATTLE TOMORROW, AND TONIGHT YOU LIE IN YOUR CAGE AND DREAM.
PERHAPS WE ARE TOO DIFFERENT FOR ANY OF THIS EVER TO WORK.
PERHAPS.
BUT IF YOU KNEW MY DREAM, YOU WOULD MAKE IT YOUR OWN.
HM.
ALL I DREAM OF IS BLOOD.
THEN GO TO SLEEP AND WAKE, AND SEE BOTH OF OUR DREAMS COME TRUE.

The following day, as Jones strolled past the cages to fetch Titan, he noticed that the other dogs seemed fussy.
They were whining, circling, some just barking once or twice and then running to the back of their cages as he passed.
Again, he failed to spy the hole above Titan's cage, where Madame Fifi now perched and waited.
She had been scratching this window larger for over a year, hiding her progress with scrapings taken out of stuffed mice.
He also neglected to see that in the stall across from Titan, a bulldog named Piggy was acting entirely out of character.
He usually spent his day in a state of heavy lethargy, his head half in his bowl.
But he was now staring urgently out his window as his tail thumped up and down.
CLIK
Pleasantly ignorant of these pre-war maneuvers, Jones took out his key and went to unlock Titan's door.
As he pulled the lock open, Jones thought to himself of the task ahead, of watching the mutt struggle and still. Every beast started differently, but they ended the same.
It was all such a tragedy.
NOW!

Piggy gave the signal: the key was in, the lock was popped, the door was open.
And the mighty Doberman pounced.
Titan rammed the man down and flew out of his cage.
The dogs all around broke into song, an atonal jangle of snarls and barks.
OOFROOFAROOF
BOWWOWWO
Jones, confused amid the din, rushed after Titan, undoubtedly hoping to get control of his animal.
He yelled out Titan's name, demanded that the dog stop and sit and stay.
In his hurry and haste, he left his key in the door's lock.
RAOW RAOW
ARFAR
At this point, Fifi left her own cage and leapt into Titan's.
RUFF RUFF BOWWOWWOW

Fifi approached the key as Piggy kept watch to see if the man would return.
AAROOOF
Piggy's nerves, when he was awake, rarely settled, and were already beginning to pound and burst.
HE'S NOT GOING TO LAST! MAN WILL SEE US! HE KNOWS!
NO, NO, NO, NO. HE'LL COME FOR US SOON! FOR ME!
THIS IS ALL MADNESS! WHY DID I HELP?! GO BACK, YOU DAMN CAT!
Fifi ignored the dog's protestation and sprang to the knob.
HAVE FAITH IN TITAN, FAT ONE. HE'S A GOOD DOG.
RAOW RAOW RAOW
Fifi's back claws slipped on the metal bars as she tried to steady herself under the key.
Her old muscles screamed at her to let go or slide down, but she defied their pleas and grasped onto the lock as Piggy continued his complaint.
YOU HAVE TRICKED US INTO THIS! YOU ARE TRICKSTERS!
ARF ARF ARF
While Fifi hung, Piggy had abandoned his watch and instead strode back and forth in his cage expressing his regrets.
THE MASTERS WILL PUNISH US ALL!
I WAS A SUCKER TO HELP YOU FELINES!
RUFF RUFF RUFF
Fifi ignored his shrieks and bit down on the key, tasting the bitter tang of metal.
BOWWOWWOW BOWW
Despite her best efforts, her claws were already wriggling down, and there was no time for panic or argument.
WE WERE SAFE! THEY'LL KILL US ALL NOW! I DIDN'T BITE ANYONE! WHY SHOULD I DIE?!
ROOF ROOF
She pulled her head back... and she had it!
CURSE ALL THE CATS IN THE WORLD!
AAROOOF

Before Fifi could land her feet on the floor, she was already hollering to Piggy, demanding he take the next step in their well-rehearsed plan.
PIGGY! THE CRY! TO TITAN!
Whether he heard her commands or not, Piggy did not acknowledge them.
PIGGY! NOW! FOR LUCKY!
I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO DIE! SOMEONE WILL FIND ME! THEY WILL LOVE ME!
ARF ARF 'ARF BOWWOW RAOW RAOW RUFF RUFF
ARF ARF AR
The bluster of the dogs bounced around her.
There was a reason they needed Piggy's voice, which was known to be the loudest in the pound.
She was a tabby, long past her prime. Her own voice was so small.
KLNK
Still, she could not see any remedy but to try.
They had come this far. Freedom was this close.
For Lucky, she thought. Always for Lucky.
She cried out as she never had before, not even when they took her mate, not even when they took her children.
She cried loud and clear, and she knew it would never be enough.
And she cried louder still.
MRRROWWWW!

Twenty feet down the hall, Titan struggled with the man who had come to kill him.
Trying his best to keep Jones focused on his own rebellion and ignore Fifi's.
AROOF AROOF AROOF AROOF
And in the midst of that struggle, somehow, most miraculously, he heard Fifi's desperate cry.
And the great dog turned his head.
He saw at the end of the long hall of cages a cat where there shouldn't be a cat.
And for a moment, the two animals locked eyes and perhaps souls.
And Titan knew in his heart that the Rubicon had been crossed. There would be no return to domesticity for any of them.
All was onward, forward.
Toward freedom.
Titan roared, bucked, attacked...
KRUNCH
...and soon tasted the warm red of man on his teeth.
AAAAH!!

Jones now felled, Titan sprinted the length of the room, galloping back to Fifi.
And the key.
JESUS! JOHN! ALEX! **HELP!** THE **DAMN** ANIMAL'S **LOST** IT!
I'M **BLEEDING!**
The dog well knew the man would now call out for his reinforcements.
And soon the kennel would be crowded with others who would be holding whips and needles and even guns.
Such an army would easily force even Titan to show his belly.
They needed to move swiftly.
They needed to meet one army...
CLIK
...with another.
And so, united in one cause...
CLIK
...dog and cat moved from cage to cage.
CLIK
Unlocking the locks.
CLIK
CLIK
Opening the doors.

When the workers arrived to put down the revolt, they were greeted by the growl of a dozen dogs and the hiss of one old cat.
There were many men.
There were more animals.

The men, who had ruled for as long as anyone alive could remember, screeched, turned, and fled.
The dogs cheered and chased them, their heated cries echoing off the walls of the cages that once held them.
They were, for the most part, merciful.
Instead of biting and tearing as their instincts demanded, they nipped and yowled.
This had been at Titan's insistence.
He had told them all:
We are not men, we are not cats, we are not rabbits.
We are dogs.
And we are noble.
AROOF
AROOF

As the dogs barked and the men screamed, Fifi took her key from the kennel, through the lobby and to the cat room.
CLIK
She needed Titan's help to open the main door, but the cages on the bottom of the cat room were within her reach.
So she allowed him to go back to the fray and chase as she freed her own people.
CLIK
Once the lower cages were opened, the cats formed ladders to rescue their brothers and sisters in the upper births.
The cats pounced out of their feces-caked cells, mewing, roweling, and even purring.
A sound almost unheard of in the pound.
Soon the room was filled with fur and stripes of all colors, all licking each other and pawing lightly at one another's throats and backs.
There is room, there is fresh air, there is you, there is me.
And we are free.

Outside, the dogs had completed their mission.
And all the men were gone except for Jones, who was too injured to walk.
Titan claimed the honor to dispose of this last man himself.
He would accept no help from either dog or cat.
This was the one who had come to take his life.
And therefore this one was his responsibility.
LOST & FOUND
ADOPTION
And once Titan had dragged him to the front and left him to bleed on the lawn, the last man was cleared from the pound.
Only the beasts remained.

MADAME FIFI, IT IS *ENDED.*
NO, MY GOOD DOG TITAN, NOT *QUITE* YET.
THEY ARE FICKLE, SMALL, AND *STUPID.*
MOREOVER, THEY ARE *FOOD.*
IT IS ONE OF THE *FEW* THINGS I BELIEVE WE AGREE UPON.
NOW, NOW, I *REMEMBER* LUCKY.
AND I DO NOT REMEMBER HIM DISCUSSING *EXCEPTIONS.* THEY ARE *ANIMALS.* THEY ARE IN CAGES. *WE* HAVE THE KEY.
IT IS A *NEW* WORLD. AND IT IS *OURS.* AND THEREFORE, IT IS *THEIRS.*
=SIGH=
TIME SPENT ARGUING WITH A *CAT* IS TIME BETTER SPENT SMELLING THE *DROPPINGS* OF FRIENDS.
WE WILL DO IT, YOU *AND* I, SHOW *THEM* WHAT HAS OCCURRED. OUR *REVELATION.*
PERHAPS *THEN* THEY WILL BE A, WELL, A *HAIR* LESS NERVOUS ABOUT US...*EATING* THEM.
And so, cat and dog together freed the rabbits from their cages.
An event so astounding that all gathered fell into silence, and the only sound in the building was the off-beat of a few tails swishing on the tile.

The animals celebrated together, running this way and that, dodging through and bounding over the barriers that once held them.
The dogs ambled outside into the yard and played with one another, rolling on top of each other and gently biting at their companions' ears and mouth.
The cats rummaged into every nook, hole, and closet, finding new corners of warmth and solidarity.
The rabbits anxiously hopped outside and fed on the leaves and grass that seemed to go on for miles.
Occasionally the groups mixed, and after some awkward moments, they celebrated together, rubbing fur to fur and smelling the others' odd musk.
In a closet in the bathroom, they found the paint and ladder.
Leftovers from an attempted renovation.
In the years since Lucky's death, Fifi had insisted that any animal who was willing try to learn to read and write.
She believed education could elevate them from their baser instincts.
That they could see what man saw in books and papers: an equality between anyone who sees an equality in another.
And so it was, when she was done with her work, many of the animals she invited into the lobby could look upon her words and understand them.

THE DOORS WILL REMAIN OPEN
As the animals stared at the wall, Fifi addressed them, her voice still scratched from her call to Titan in the midst of the already legendary battle.
"THE DAYS AHEAD OF US WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE FULL OF **STRUGGLE** AND **TRIUMPH**.
"WE WILL **SCRAP** AND WE WILL **WHINE** AS WE STUBBORNLY WORK TO DISCOVER HOW TO FEED AND SHELTER OURSELVES.
"BUT THROUGH IT ALL, WE WILL HAVE THIS **ONE IDEA** TO GUIDE US AND BIND US.
"IT WAS **LUCKY'S** VISION.
"THE DOORS ARE OPEN.
"IT IS NOW **OUR** LIFE.
"DOGS. CATS. RABBITS.
"WE ARE **ANIMALS**.
"WE ARE **EQUAL**.
"AND WE ARE **FREE**."

That first night, most everyone chose to sleep in the newly discovered crannies found throughout the pound.
The hallways, bathrooms, and lobby were stuffed with curled, snoring, seemingly melted, certainly content balls of fur.
Raven, never one to follow a trend, elected to return to his hole on the perch where he usually spent his hours.
It was here he had enjoyed many a nap and here that he might find some peace amongst all the roaring revolutions of the day.
However, despite the familiar bristle of well-used carpet, the old cat, who had slept through decades, could not find a wink of rest.
The same worry kept shouting in his mind, and he found himself powerless to quiet it.
It seemed to him that the cages and the keys used to keep these thoughts away.
And as sure as the animals were let out, these new demons were let in.
As cats do, he looked out into the night and saw all there was to see.
There. There was the flaw in it all. The crack that would become the break.
He saw what he knew the dogs, despite their thick heads, would soon see, what would bring their jaws onto his neck.
Not knowing what to do, he simply hissed into the dark as if the enemy was upon him, about to make the kill.
But the animals of the pound, buried in the warmth of victory, did not hear anything.
Instead, they all slept soundly, dreaming of their new, better world.

CHAPTER
TWO

A Rabbit Can Only Run

Less than a month after the revolution...
...Feather, a young but seasoned rabbit, was in the yard scraping at some dirt hoping to free a daisy when, without understanding why...
...he began to run.
It was not until he was in full flight that Feather heard Riley's low rumbled growl and the hammer of his paws on the yard.
RRRRRRRR
This is the enviable gift of rabbits--to dash before they know what is chasing them.
Deprived of fearsome teeth and claws, a rabbit must rely on speed, dread, and anticipation to survive to the end of each day.
ARROOOF!
But at times, even those particularly keen instincts are not enough.

GRRRRGGGRR
SKRREEE SKREEEEE!
An immediate problem in the wake of new freedom was that some of the animals wanted to eat the others.
Specifically, the dogs wanted to eat the rabbits.
GRRGGGGRRG
(And the cats as well, though they kept this unpleasant passion in better check.)
SKREEEE!
Fortunately, the animals--as always, remembering Lucky--quietly resolved not to act upon their more base desires.
And for weeks, beyond a growl here and a whimper there, the dogs managed to cohabitate peacefully enough with their fuzzy-tailed friends.
Soon, however, another problem arose that ballooned the temptation in those animals clinging desperately to restraint.
The stores of food left by the humans after they fled, the kibble doled out to cats and dogs alike, was running thin.
And it was not at all evident how the free animals could resupply.

They were good dogs.
They were all good dogs.
But every good dog has a bad day.

SOMETHING MUST BE DONE.
DID YOU THINK I WOULD ***DISAGREE*** WITH YOU?
YOU TELL ME WHAT I ***ALREADY*** SAY AND EXPECT ME TO SAY IT ***AGAIN?***
WHAT IS THE ***PURPOSE*** IN ***THAT?***
YOU ARE ***MADAME FIFI!***
YES, AND YOU ARE ***BIG FOOT.***
WE HAVE EXCHANGED NAMES ***AND*** FRUSTRATIONS.
IS THERE ***MORE?*** I AM BUSY. NOT BUSY FOR A ***RABBIT*** MAYBE, BUT FOR A ***CAT*** VERY MUCH SO.
I DID NOT KNOW ***LUCKY!***
I DID NOT ***PREACH*** HIS ***WORD!***
BECAUSE I ***REMEMBER*** LUCKY, DOES NOT MEAN I ***FEASTED*** UPON YOUR KIN.
WE ARE ALL ***EQUALS.*** YOU, I, AND THEY.
TELL THE ***DOG*** WHO DID IT.

YES, I *WILL* DO THAT.
AND WHEN *THAT* ONE EATS ME, THE *NEXT* RABBIT WILL DO THE SAME.
UNTIL *ALL* THE RABBITS ARE GONE DOWN THE *GULLET.*
AND ALL THE *DOGS* HAVE THE TASTE FOR FRESH, *WARM* BLOOD.
THEN YOU *CATS* WILL DISCOVER HOW FAR A STRETCHED BACK AND A WELL-PRACTICED HISS WILL DEFEND YOU FROM TEETH *CLENCHING* DOWN ON YOUR CHEST.
AS HE *SHAKES* YOU, AND YOUR NECK *SNAPS,* PERHAPS THEN YOU TOO WILL REMEMBER *LUCKY.*
AND *PERHAPS* THEN YOU WILL REMEMBER *BIG FOOT* AS WELL.
THAT IS NOT--
!!
=SIGH=

It had been the custom of the cats to enjoy the many warm and lonely corners of the pound for each night's repast.
OPTION
That evening, though, after the carnage of the yard...
...all the many wanderers gathered instead in the playroom where they cuddled in close to their fellows.
They said nothing as to why they all insisted on being together, but a bold tabby did question whether they might close the door.
Perhaps even find a way to lock it.
It was Fifi who reminded her of the one law of the pound: The doors will remain open.
The tabby demurred and withdrew her proposal. She turned back to the task of finding a perch and bedfellow.
Eventually they put their heads down and forgot the dangers outside.
For a cat, to live is to sleep, and no day's fright would rob them of that duty.
Even Fifi finally conceded to the night, though her dreams were mighty and terrible.
Behind clutched eyes, she mewled as her claws extended and retracted in and out of her paw.

The next day, Fifi approached Titan, who was outside with Piggy sniffing at a tree.
I HAVE SPOKEN TO **RILEY.**
HE **REGRETS** THE INCIDENT.
Fifi was unsure of the extent of the Doberman's power over the others.
ARE WE **SAFE?** WE DO **NOT** FEEL SAFE.
But she had seen dogs defer to him often enough.
EVERY ANIMAL IS MADE OF **BONE,** AND BONES ARE MADE TO BE **CHEWED.**
YOU ARE AS **SAFE** AS THAT **TRUTH** ALLOWS YOU TO BE.
And beside that, she knew he would at least listen.
I DID NOT **RESCUE** DOGS TO BE **SLAUGHTERED** BY THEM.
AS I AM SURE **YOU** DID NOT RESCUE CATS TO BE **MAULED** BY THEM.
Which is more than she could say for others of his ilk.
HEE HEE HEE, **MAULED** BY A CAT...
AFTER THE FIRST SWALLOW, CAN THEY SCRATCH AT YOU **INSIDE** YOUR BELLY? **THAT** WOULD HURT!
HEE HEE HEE!

WHAT IS IT YOU **WANT** FROM ME, ***MADAME?***
THE DOORS ***REMAIN*** OPEN, BUT FOR THEM TO CONTINUE AS SUCH, WE MUST HAVE ***SOMETHING*** MORE THAN WHAT ***THIS*** IS.
TO SECURE ***FOOD*** FOR ALL AND ***PEACE*** FOR ALL.
OR ELSE ***MAN*** WILL RETURN AND BE GREETED NOT BY SNARL AND HISS, BUT BY OUR EVER GRATEFUL ***GROVEL.***
RRRRRRRR
OUR ***REVOLUTION*** MUST BE MORE THAN ***PAINT*** ON A WALL.
"SOMETHING," YOU SAY.
I DESPISE THE ***VAGUE.*** WHAT IS ***THIS?*** STOP ***PUSSY-***FOOTING AROUND AND ***SPIT*** IT OUT.
JUSTICE, MY GOOD PUP.
YOU ***AND*** I, THE BIG ***AND*** THE SMALL.
WE ***ALL*** SEEK ***JUSTICE.***

REMEMBER LUCKY.
YES.
REMEMBER LUCKY.
REMEMBER LUCKY!

As a first step, all the animals gathered together in the large common room at the center of the pound.
ND WE CAN'T GET **CARROTS** TO FEED US BECAUS WE DON'T LIKE **CARROTS** I DON'T LIKE THEM BUT VERYONE THINKS WE DO BECAUSE OF SOME CARTO UT WE DON'T AND WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO EAT THE WE DON'T WANT TO AND WE DON'T WANT TO BECAU THE EFFECTS OF **CARROTS** EVEN THOUG
There were a few rabbits, many dogs, and many more cats.
WILL REMAIN OPEN
All were invited to speak, and a diverse scatter of opinions was heard.
I LIKE TO PLAY. IF WE COULD HAVE *MORE* PLAYING.
I THINK THAT WOULD BE *FUN*. SUPER FUN, EVEN. OKAY?
Some whined, some ranted, some wished, some simply stated the obvious.
Or what was obvious to them.
THERE'S TOO MANY *STAIRS!*
MAKE EVERYTHING *LOWER!*
The chatter went on for hours and hours.
Much was said.
PLEASE, *PLEASE,* NOT ALL AT ONCE!
WE ARE NOT *BIRDS,* WE DO NOT NEED TO *CHIRP!*
Much was argued.
And, sadly, little was accomplished.
T **CARROTS** AND HO **CARROTS** AND EVE HINK WE LIKE **CARROTS** B E DON'T BUT I FORGOT TO SAY ABOUT TH RROTS THAT WE'VE GOTTEN IS THAT MO OPLE DON'T KNOW THAT **CARROTS** ARE N WHAT WE NEED NOT JUST SPEAKING FOR

And finally, Titan, whose patience never ran long, could no longer sit still and listen.
ENOUGH OF THIS PRATTLE!
Fifi, whose own frustrations were hardly concealed behind her fur, spoke out, though she knew well it would do little good.
MY GOOD DOG...
And sure enough, she was interrupted as Titan turned back toward the dog cages.
IF **EVERYONE** MUST BE HEARD, THEN **NO ONE** IS HEARD.
AND I DO NOT CARE TO WASTE **MY** TIME LISTENING TO **USELESS** SILENCE.
Without Titan to keep them settled, the remaining dogs remembered that dinner was soon enough and their bowls were not in this room.
They, too, exited the discussion.
The cats and rabbits continued their ramblings, but without a true quorum no progress could be made.
Fifi sighed, bowed her head, and thought of the long nap she would take before she slept that night.

THREE FROM EACH-- THE RABBITS, THE CATS, AND THE DOGS.
WE EACH PICK OUR OWN.
THEN THE NINE SOLVE THE PROBLEMS THE ENTIRETY CANNOT.
THERE IS INSUFFICIENT FOOD. THE DOGS CONSUME THE RABBITS.
IT SEEMS TO ME THESE SUPPOSED PROBLEMS YOU'RE DEALING WITH SOLVE THEMSELVES.
YOU SPEAK, GOOD DOG, AS THOUGH WE ARE HELPLESS.
BUT PERHAPS YOU FORGET THAT YOU ARE A HANDFUL AND WE ARE LEGION. FOR EVERY TOOTH YOU HAVE, WE HAVE TEN SHARP CLAWS.
IF IT IS ALL TO BE DETERMINED IN THE SAVAGE WAY, ARE YOU SO CERTAIN THAT WE CANNOT FIND THE SOFT OF YOUR BELLIES AS EASILY AS THE HUMANS ONCE DID?
YOU THREATEN?
NO, I PROPOSE.
THREE FROM EACH.
=SIGH=
MY MOTHER SAID, NEVER CATCH A CAT, BECAUSE YOU'LL JUST END UP CHOKING ON THEIR TAILS.
SHE WAS A WISE BITCH.

Over the next weeks, the animals held scores of meetings and delved into piles of disputes.
LOST & FOUND
ADOPTION
Finally, as the food grew ever scarcer, they were able to temporarily pause their bickering long enough to choose who would represent their interest.
The chosen were as follows:
The Rabbits.
Honey, a young and seemingly shy female who many whispered was the most cunning and dangerous rabbit of her generation.
Dash, a prideful, lusty rabbit with a high and unfettered confidence not often found in the species.
Pepper, a grizzled elder whose right ear had been half torn off by a dog less than a year ago.
The Cats.
Madame Fifi, one of the oldest of the cats and the animal most loved in the pound for her connection to the beloved Lucky.
Raven, the wisest of the cats. He only came along because others insisted.
Hercules, a wild Tom who had fathered basketfuls but rarely raised his voice, a quiet that was considered by cats to be powerful.
The Dogs.
Titan, the top dog, a hero of the revolution. The one who was to be followed.
Piggy, another hero of the revolution, or so he often claimed. His unquestioned fealty to Titan earned him status among his peers.
Baron, the largest, strongest, and perhaps most loyal of all dogs. Admired by many, but known well by few.

THE DOORS WILL REMAIN OPEN
And thus met for the first time, the Animal Congress.
Their discussions ranged far and wide.
Everything from the origins of the social contract to daily feces disposal.
The talks went on day and night for weeks.
At times all issues seemed resolved and the participants would discreetly celebrate what they had accomplished.
Then a moment would quickly pass, a trivial objection would be raised, and all parties would once again be at each other's throats.
Different coalitions emerged and fell apart and reformed again.
Rabbits and dogs, cats and rabbits, dogs and cats; each would collapse as easily as they came together.
Shouting was the norm. But there were moments of comity. It was not unheard of for the animals to sleep fur to fur in their hourly rests.
The problem, of course, was that each group had its wants and needs.
What was good for cats was not for dogs. And what was good for dogs was not for cats.
And then there were the rabbits...
Throughout the donnybrook, if doubt arose in the animals, Fifi and Titan sought one another and convinced the other to go one more hour, one more evening, one more week.
The stakes were high. Starvation and death awaited.
A solution would present itself.
Everything was examined, parsed, debated.
And still nothing was decided.

Finally, unable to stomach a moment more of the incessant quibbling...
...Titan sought solitude in an unannounced inspection of the dwindling food supplies.
WE NEED A *LEADER.*
His hopes of seclusion were thwarted when Fifi decided to join him.
CAN YOU *EAT* A LEADER?
OUR CONGRESS CAN CERTAINLY MAKE *PROPOSITIONS,* BUT SOMEONE MUST MAKE *DETERMINATIONS.*
OR ELSE WE ARE A DOZEN *KITTENS* TRYING TO CLIMB INTO A SMALL KNOT HOLE IN THE FURRED TREE, ALL *STUCK* AT THE ENTRANCE.
HOW CAN WE *CHOOSE* ONE OF US? *YOUR* THREE WILL CHOOSE *YOU.* MINE, *MYSELF.* THE RABBITS...
WELL, IF *THEY* GET THEIR WAY, WE *WILL* BE ABLE TO EAT A *LEADER.*
IT IS TOO LARGE A DECISION FOR JUST *US.* WE WOULD FACE SURE REVOLT. WE WOULD BE THE *HUMANS,* THE *LESS* CONTROLLING THE *MORE.*
IT MUST BE THE *ENTIRE* POUND.
ONE ANIMAL, *ONE* VOTE.
YOU OFTEN CALL ME *"GOOD"* DOG.
I HAD *NO* IDEA "GOOD" MEANT *"STUPID"* ALL THIS TIME.

THERE ARE *MORE* CATS THAN DOGS.
MORE CATS THAN RABBITS.
MORE CATS THAN DOGS AND RABBITS *TOGETHER.*
ONE ANIMAL, ONE VOTE MEANS *PERPETUAL* RULE BY *CATS.*
OUR LIVES WOULD *FOREVER* BE SUBJUGATED TO WHATEVER MAKES YOUR PACK *PURR.*
LUCKY SPOKE OF *FREEDOM.* AND YOU DEMURELY ASK FOR *SLAVERY.*
NO. SUCH A VOTE...*WE* WOULD HAVE TO REBEL. YOU WOULD *FORCE* US TO LEAVE.
THEN YOU MIGHT SEE HOW LONG *YOU* ARE SAFE FROM THE HUMANS' RETURN WITHOUT THE *BARK* AND *BITE* OF MY KIND.
TITAN...
...WHAT *ELSE* CAN WE DO?
RIGHT NOW, *EVERYTHING* INSIDE ME SAYS TO *DEFY* OUR PROTOCOL--TO *RIP* THIS PAPER, AND CHOW TO MY ACHING STOMACH'S *CONTENT.*
IF *YOU* OBJECTED, I COULD GNAW ON YOU LIKE A *TOY.*
WHAT *YOU* MUST ASK YOURSELF IS THE SAME QUESTION *I* ASK MYSELF EVERY DAY.
THE *QUESTION* THAT STANDS AT THE *HEART* OF THIS ENTIRE ENDEAVOR.
WHAT *IS* IT THAT *STOPS* ME?

Titan sniffed deep, filling his nose with the temptation of the kibble, which was flavored with Alaskan Salmon.
Then, tilting his head high, he marched away, back toward the common room where Congress continued to quarrel.
As the great dog passed, Fifi could not help but notice how large he truly was.
He was five times the size of the biggest cats she'd known.
So many dogs were.
And it was this small epiphany that set the course for all the glory and tragedy that would follow.

That very night, Fifi shared her revelation with Raven and Hercules, seeking their counsel in the possibilities.
She could now envision a way forward.
It would require sacrifice, but the rewards here were possibly great enough that the cost must be paid.
Hercules asked dozens and dozens of questions and seemed at first skeptical. "What about... and could we... and what if they..."
It was perhaps the most he had ever talked his whole nine lives.
When he was done, when many assurances had been proffered, he nodded his head and said simply, "It is the only way."
Raven, in contrast, who was known to express his views loudly if sporadically, kept his objections and endorsements to himself.
He listened to all that Fifi said, to each of her detailed answers to Hercules's queries, then closed his eyes.
When Fifi called up to him to ask for his opinion on all of it, he did not answer.

The next day, the Congress opened with Fifi's address.
THE DOGS WILL REMAIN OPEN
WE WILL DO IT WITH *WEIGHT.*
WE CANNOT RISK *LOSING* THE DOGS AND WE CANNOT CONCEDE *ALL* TO THEM AS WELL.
WE MUST FIND A WAY TO BE *EQUAL* BEFORE WE FIND A WAY TO BE *JUST.*
FOR WAS IT NOT THE GREAT *LUCKY* THAT SAID CATS AND DOGS MUST SIT EYE TO EYE?
THE *CATS* ARE MORE NUMEROUS. THE DOGS ARE *LARGER.*
WHAT WILL MAKE US *EQUAL* IS POUNDS AND OUNCES.
OUR *NUMBERS* DIFFER, BUT OUR *WEIGHT,* I BELIEVE, IS ABOUT THE *SAME.*
ONCE OUR VOTING POWER IS EQUIVALENT, *WHO* HOLDS POWER WILL BE DETERMINED BY WHO CAN CONVINCE THE *OTHER* OF THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS.
AND WHO CAN *EMPOWER* THE RABBITS, WHO ARE, YES, SMALL AND FEW, BUT WILL CARRY *GREAT* SWAY IN SUCH A SYSTEM.
COMPROMISE IS THE CONSEQUENCE OF *TRUE* EQUALITY.
OUR LEADER WILL BE CHOSEN OUT OF *COMPROMISE* AND BE *FORCED* TO COMPROMISE TO OBTAIN AND TO RETAIN POWER.
THAT ANIMAL, OUR LEADER, WILL HAVE NO CHOICE *BUT* TO SEEK CONSENSUS. THEY WILL HAVE NO *VOICE* WITHOUT CONSENSUS.
THAT IS JUST.
THAT IS *JUSTICE.*

Her speech finished, Madame Fifi turned to her fellow members of Congress.
She expected objection, resentment, perhaps even rebellion.
She was unprepared for silence.
WELL...
...WHAT *IS* IT?
CAT GOT YOUR *TONGUE?*

Finally, Titan came forward, his voice booming against the pale walls where the humans had once labored.
REMEMBER *LUCKY!*
Fifi was happy to see his devotion, and she again bowed her head.
YES, REMEMBER--
And that was when she heard the rest of his cry.
AND REMEMBER *MADAME FIFI!*
Soon, as was his want, Piggy echoed Titan's call.
REMEMBER *FIFI!* REMEMBER *FIFI!* REMEMBER *FIFI!*
They were then joined by the entire Congress.
REMEMBER *FIFI!*
REMEMBER *FIFI!*
Until every animal in the pound could hear their mighty, thumping cry.
REMEMBER *FIFI!*
REMEMBER *FIFI!*
REMEMBER *FIFI!*

The Congress returned to their constituents and reported on their findings.
There would be an election to determine a Leader.
The Leader would receive recommendations from the Congress of Nine and then would execute the best possible scheme.
To ensure accountability, new elections would be held every three months.
To prevent a dictatorship of the majority, voting would be weighted by pounds.
23.0 LB
Larger animals needed more resources and were more essential for the defense of the compound.
It was natural that their say would thus count more.
In the first election, there would be two items up for vote.
Every animal would have an equal chance to vote yes or no to this proposed system of leadership.
Additionally, each animal would have a weighted vote for three possible candidates to be the first Leader of the pound if the system passed.
VOTE
VOTE
NO
HONEY
This initial election was held that very week.
The candidates for Leader were chosen by the Congress.
The EQUAL SYSTEM
Yes ☐
NO ☐
MADAME FIFI ☐ CAT
TITAN ☐ DOG
oney ☐ RABBIT
With the caveat that future candidates would be chosen by a direct vote of each group of animals.

There was little campaigning of any kind prior to the first election.
All the candidates praised all the other candidates.
Saying any victory for one was a victory for all three.
It was generally understood that Honey the rabbit was not a serious prospect, as even among rabbits she was not universally adored.
And rabbits already represented the least powerful block of voters.
Most animals assumed either Fifi or Titan would be the first to lead them.
And, generally speaking, they were content with either option.
Both were heroes of the revolution, both were beloved among their own kind, both had a reputation respecting those outside their kind.
And so animals once confined to cages to be either enslaved or killed, proceeded to cast their vote.
Yes
NO
honey
TiTAN
FiFi
Yes
NO
Most found it thrilling.

And the winner...
ILL REMAIN OPEN
MY STATEMENT TODAY SHALL BE BRIEF.
FIRST. I AM GRATEFUL FOR YOUR SUPPORT.
THIS IS THE HONOR OF MY DOG YEARS.
I RENEW HERE MY COMMITMENT TO LUCKY'S DREAM.
PEACE, FREEDOM, EQUALITY.
DOGS
CATS
THE DOORS WILL REMAIN OPEN
NEXT, MY FIRST DECLARATION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE CONGRESS OF ANIMALS IS THAT NO OTHER ANIMAL SHALL KILL ANOTHER.
IF IT IS DONE, WHOMEVER HAS DONE IT, FROM THAT POINT ON, WILL BE A BAD BOY AND WILL BE PUNISHED AS SUCH.
FINALLY, I AM WELL AWARE OF THE FOOD SITUATION.
WE ARE WORKING ON ADDRESSING IT NOW AND WILL HAVE A FIX SHORTLY.
THAT IS ALL I HAVE AT THIS TIME.
AGAIN, THANK YOU.

The animals went back to their work and play.
Enjoying again their days roaming through open doors.
Confident that their newly elected Leader would find a way for them to continue in their revelry.
But, though Titan spent all his time and energy seeking to solve the food crisis, in the weeks to come he found every way blocked.
For food, you need money or wild things. To get money and wild things, they would have to leave the pound.
If they left the pound, the humans would...
EXCUSE ME, MR. LEADER, SIR.
He had begun to fear the first Leader of the Animals would be the last.
I VOTED FOR MADAME FIFI BUT I HAD AN IDEA OF WHAT TO DO TO HELP FOR THE FOOD BUT I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD TELL YOU BECAUSE I VOTED FOR MADAME FIFI.
MR. LEADER. SIR. GOOD DOG. I MEAN.
HOW DARE YOU COME NEAR THE LEADER AS HE IS GIVING WATER, CAT!
THE ARROGANCE OF YOU PUSSIES THAT YOU CANNOT--
PIGGY!
DOWN, BOY!
NNN!
NNN NN
I APOLOGIZE FOR PIGGY. HE IS PASSIONATE IN HIS LOYALTY.
WHICH IS LAUDABLE FOR A DOG, BUT CAN BE UNDERSTANDABLY DISCONCERTING TO A CAT.
WHAT IS YOUR NAME, YOUNG ONE?
I'M MITTEN.
MITTEN THE KITTEN.

THE *HUMANS* CALLED IT THE *KITTEN CAM.*
AND WE WOULD COME IN HERE, THEY'D *TAKE* US IN HERE AND *PET* US AND WE'D GO IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA AND PEOPLE WOULD *WATCH* US.
ALL OVER THE *WORLD.*
THAT IS NICE, YOUNG ONE. I *HAVE* SEEN THIS DEVICE.
I DO NOT *BELIEVE* IT--
NO, BUT THEN, *LEADER TITAN,* THEN...
...IF WE WERE *CUTE,* THE PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD WOULD PRESS A *BUTTON.*
AND IT SENT *MONEY* TO US. THE POUND, I MEAN.
THE HUMANS GOT REALLY *SUPER* EXCITED ABOUT IT.
THEY... *SENT* YOU MONEY?
YEAH, AND, LIKE, IF WE DID *TRICKS* AND STUFF THEY'D SEND US *MORE* MONEY.
SO MAYBE IF WE DID *ENOUGH* TRICKS AND WE DID THE CAMERA AND WE DID IT *GOOD* MAYBE WE COULD GET *MONEY.*
AND MAYBE WE COULD *BUY* STUFF, Y'KNOW. MR. LEADER. *SIR.*

Without prompting, Piggy climbed a chair.
HEE HEE!
Then made his way onto the table.
A CAMERA...
Piggy stared into the lens, trying to see the world of men on the other side.
IS IT ON?
"THE MORE YOU GET THEIR ATTENTION, THE MORE YOU GET THEIR MONEY."
THE HUMANS SAID THAT. IS THAT HELPFUL TOO?
But all that was revealed was his own reflection.
HEE HEE!

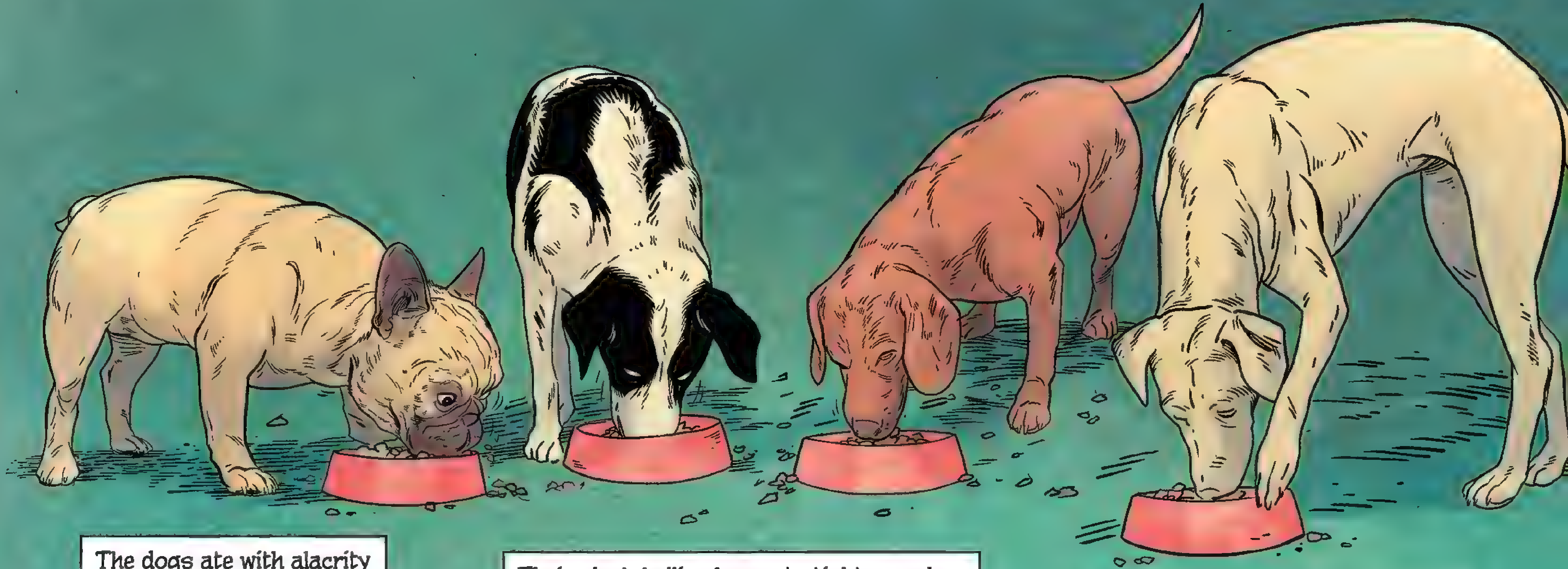
CHAPTER THREE

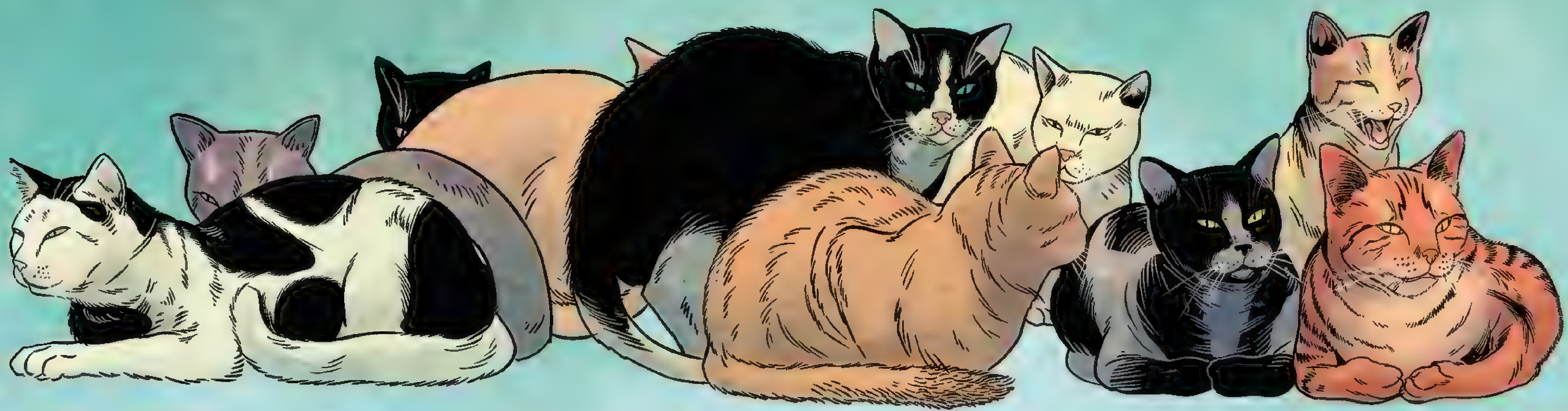
Piggy Performs

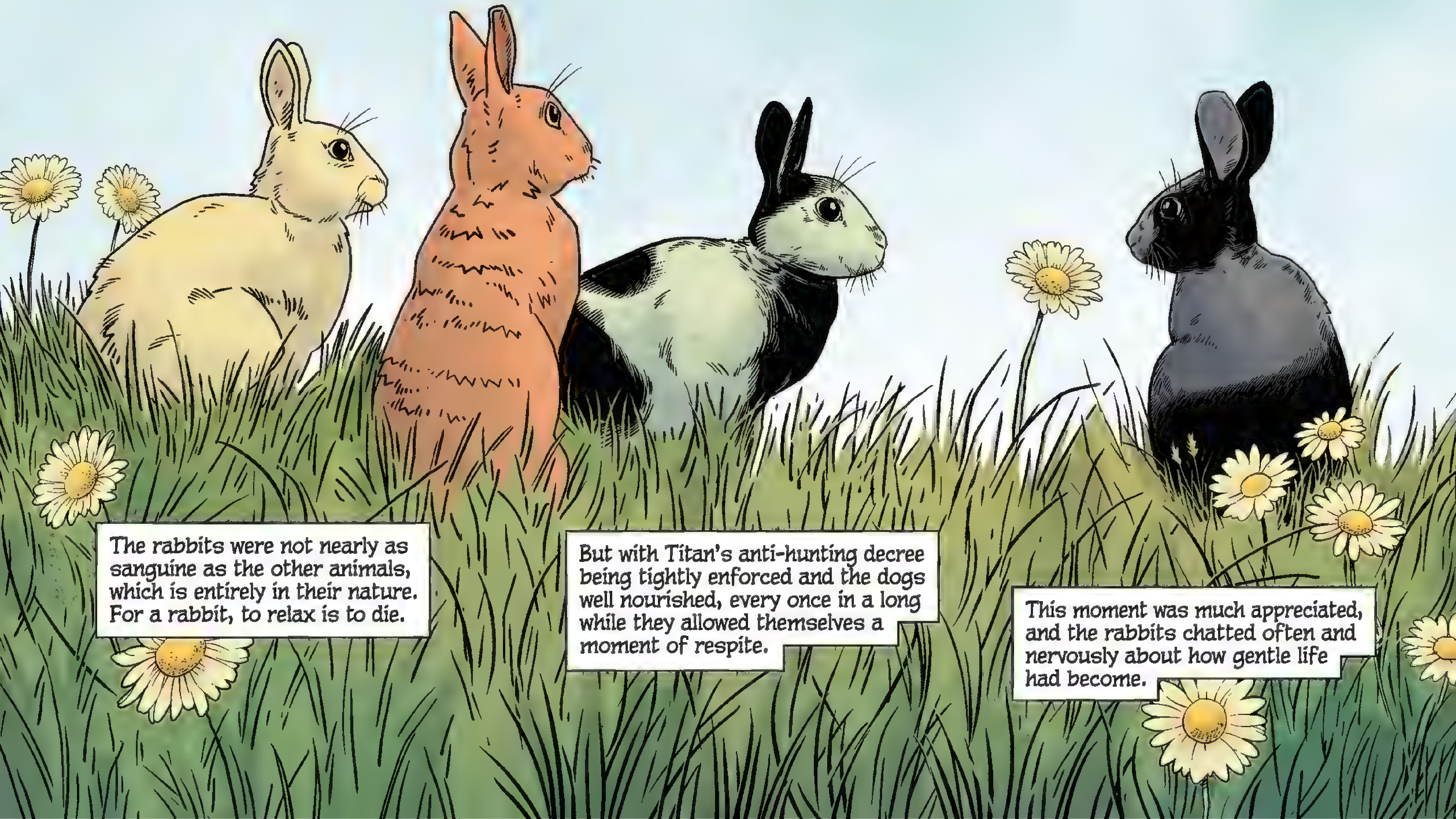
NN?
GRNN
MM?!
THBBHT
HN!
RRRNN...
HH-HH-
HH-HH--
RRNN?

HEE HEE!
DONATE NOW!

Three months into Titan's first term as Leader, all was, if not well, then undeniably getting better.
After a few weeks, Fifi and Raven, the cleverest of the cats, had managed to set up the Kitten Cam.
LOST & FOUND
ADOPTION
And everyone was now reaping the rewards.
To the shock of most of the animals, the humans--
--who had once so eagerly held them in bondage--
--seemed utterly charmed by the free animals of the open-door pound.
Cats, dogs, and rabbits each took turns before the camera.
They performed the few tricks they knew, made exuberant gestures and noises, or sometimes just did nothing at all.
All the while, the humans pushed a button on a screen, which, apparently, allowed for Titan to order more and more food.
It was puzzling to most and remarkable to all.


The dogs ate with alacrity and glee twice a day and were provided more treats and snacks in between.
Their slack bellies began to tighten under their fur, and they found they had ever more energy to pounce and frolic in the yard.
In the afternoons, they would lounge in the sun, their tongues out and bobbing, their eyes closed as a blanket of heat fell over them.


The cats too were full and satisfied, or as satisfied as cats ever got, for--as they would be the first to tell you--a content cat is rare and usually insane.
But with the dogs occupied and the bowls so often full, they had time to sleep anywhere and everywhere.
(With food so plentiful, a mouse or two was known to take a poke inside the pound, a thrilling secret the cats tried to keep to themselves.)


The rabbits were not nearly as sanguine as the other animals, which is entirely in their nature. For a rabbit, to relax is to die.
But with Titan's anti-hunting decree being tightly enforced and the dogs well nourished, every once in a long while they allowed themselves a moment of respite.
This moment was much appreciated, and the rabbits chatted often and nervously about how gentle life had become.

DOGS
THE DOORS
REMAIN OPEN
VOT
35.2 LB
TITAN
FIFI
TITAN
FIFI

Soon enough, Titan's first term came to its end and a new election was held.

The animals, of course, demanded Titan run again.

Which he humbly and rather reluctantly accepted, noting that he would rather spend his time walking or chasing off squirrels.

The cats nominated Fifi again. Her role in securing the camera was well acknowledged, and she remained the animal closest to the beloved Lucky.

But Fifi knew that Titan's support was strong among dogs, cats, and rabbits. Even without weighted voting, Titan would likely be victorious.

And so, rather than campaign, she spent her days sunning in a windowsill, content to be loved and rejected.

The rabbits did not field a candidate for the election.

This was perhaps prudent, but many whispered that they had just forgotten.

Election Day soon arrived, and all the animals were again weighed to determine the power of their vote.

With the extra food, it was noted that everyone had gained pounds here and there, something that provoked bursts of jokes and merriment.

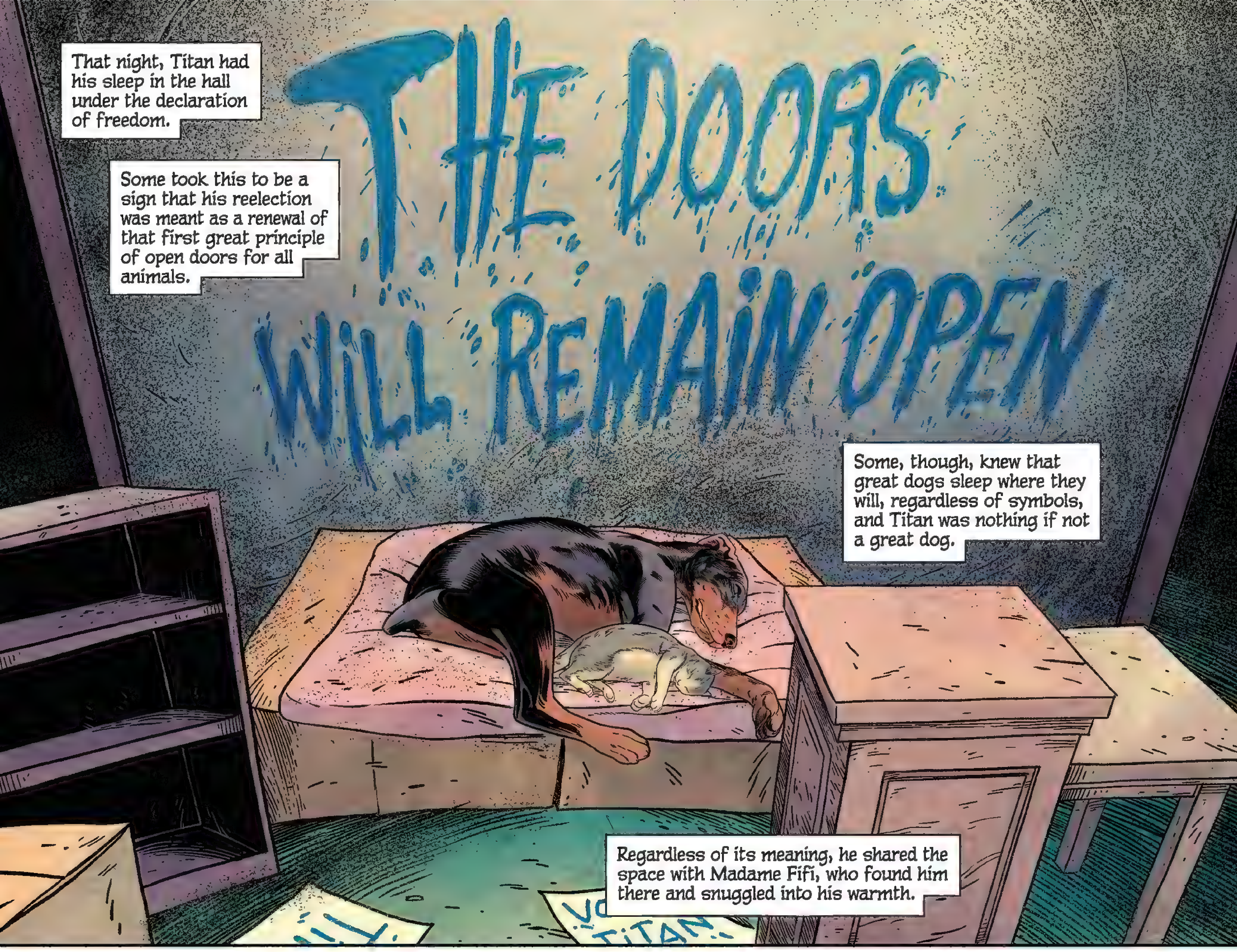
As expected, Titan was reelected in a landslide, and the animals cheered raucously at his second inauguration.

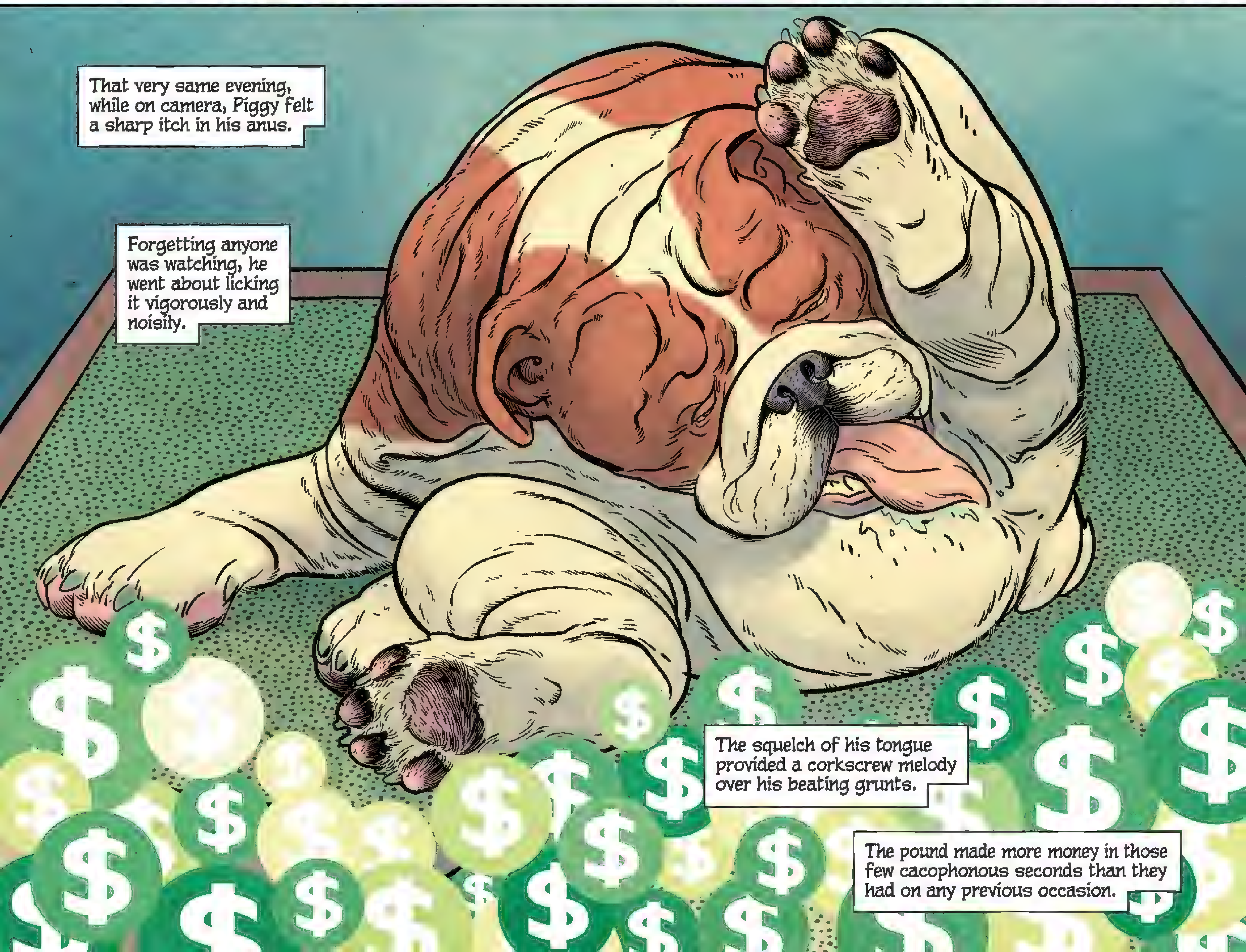
There he spoke briefly of the need to embrace both prosperity and independence, as the two were inextricably linked.

The next day, Fifi and Titan walked in the yard and discussed plans for the future.

IT MUST BE **SECRET** FOR NOW. BUT **YOU** HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW.
THIS WILL BE MY **FINAL** ELECTION.
OH NO. IS WINNING **SO** AWFUL, MY PUP?
DO I NEED TO **CRY** FOR YOUR **TEARS?**
WINNING IS **GOOD.**
WHICH IS **WHY** IT WILL BE MY LAST.
IN **THREE** MONTHS, YOU WILL CHANGE. YOU WILL HAVE **ALL** THE VOTES BY THEN. YOU WILL CERTAINLY HAVE **MINE,** AT THE LEAST.
NO ONE KNOWS MORE THAN **I** THAT WE NEED A **GOOD BOY** NOW MORE THAN EVER. THIS IS WHAT YOU **AND** I FOUGHT FOR.
WE FOUGHT TO BE FREE. YOU WOULD HAVE ME BE **KING.**
NO, **I** REMEMBER LUCKY.
AND I **ALWAYS** WILL.
DOGS. YOU SPEND YOUR DAYS MAKING **OTHERS** HAPPY.
TITAN, MY **FRIEND,** YOU **HAVE** MADE US MORE FREE.
FREE FROM **HUNGER,** FROM **FEAR,** FREE FROM **WANT.**
YES.
AND **NOW** YOU SHALL BE FREE OF **ME.**

STOP THAT!
YOU DAMN FELINE! DON'T YOU KNOW WHAT MUST BE?!
FIFI, I AM TRYING TO DO WHAT IS BEST FOR THE POUND.
DO YOU THINK I WANT TO--
OH, SHUT YOUR YIPPING, DOG! I MEAN THE GRASS!
IF YOU EAT THOSE USELESS GREENS, YOUR STOMACH WILL FEEL IT, AND YOU'LL BE RETCHING ON THE CARPET WE JUST ORDERED!
AH, YES.
=SIGH= WELL, YOU DIZZY FURBALL. DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT.
THAT'S ONLY SOME OLD WIVES' TALE.
I'M NO WIFE, BUT I AM OLD.
SO I WILL WORRY HALF AS MUCH AS YOU SAY, WHICH IS MORE THAN ENOUGH FOR THE BOTH OF US.
MY GOOD BOY.


That night, Titan had his sleep in the hall under the declaration of freedom.
Some took this to be a sign that his reelection was meant as a renewal of that first great principle of open doors for all animals.
THE DOORS WILL REMAIN OPEN
Some, though, knew that great dogs sleep where they will, regardless of symbols, and Titan was nothing if not a great dog.
Regardless of its meaning, he shared the space with Madame Fifi, who found him there and snuggled into his warmth.
TITAN


That very same evening, while on camera, Piggy felt a sharp itch in his anus.
Forgetting anyone was watching, he went about licking it vigorously and noisily.
The squelch of his tongue provided a corkscrew melody over his beating grunts.
The pound made more money in those few cacophonous seconds than they had on any previous occasion.

Titan's second term was much akin to his first.
The pound continued to flourish and animals lived large and well.
Piggy's popularity with the human audience grew after his fortuitous moment of derriere fame.
Soon he was the pound's biggest earner, though a few newborn kittens also did unsurprisingly well.
A small hiccup occurred when a group of rabbits seemingly spontaneously decided to leave the yard and seek grass outside the walls.
Fearing for their safety, Titan and three other dogs went after them and managed to herd most of the group back to the pound.
Those not found were not heard from again.
There were some mild rumblings from the cats that two terms of dog rule had resulted in a restriction of their access to various pound spaces.
They complained that the barking and growling of the canines was forcing them into tiny, more protected nooks.
But cats enjoy complaining, and few animals saw this as a major issue.
Titan's announcement that he would not run for a third term was met with almost universal disapproval.
The uneasy animals fretted over how to go on without their faithful companion, best friend, and stolid leader.
Titan decided to address these growing concerns with a short statement in his final month in office.

REMAIN
I AM NOT THE POUND.
NOR ARE YOU.
THE POUND IS NOT OPEN DOORS.
IT IS NOT THE FOOD IN YOUR BOWL.
IT IS NOT THE WALLS, OR THE YARD, OR THE BED.
IT IS NOT THE LAW.
OR THE SACRED WORDS ABOVE ME.
THE POUND IS THE DREAM.
NOT MY DREAM, NO, AND NOT YOURS.
NOT EVEN LUCKY'S.
IT IS OUR DREAM.
THE DREAM OF ALL FREE ANIMALS.
IT DOES NOT BELONG TO ONE DOG OR CAT OR RABBIT.
ALL OF US SHARE IN ITS PROMISE, AS WE DO ITS REWARD.
I CHOOSE TO LEAVE NOT BECAUSE MY DUTY IS DONE...
...BUT BECAUSE OUR DREAM IS NOT.
EMAIN
IT WAS MY HONOR TO SERVE YOU THESE PAST MONTHS.
REMEMBER LUCKY.
REMEMBER THE DREAM.

In the next election, Fifi finally won her first victory.
The rabbits, still disturbed by the dogs not being able to save their strays, sided with the cats who promised better protection.
The dogs voted for Rascal, a Siberian/Beagle mix with long ears and blue eyes who sold himself as another Titan, but convinced almost no one of this bold assertion.
WILL REMAIN OPEN
VOTE FIFI
VOTE RASCAL
Fifi carried on most of Titan's policies and often consulted with him on matters of contention between the animals.
She did show more leeway to the needs of the cats than he had, though, putting regulations in to control barking and growling.
A few particularly timid cats who had secluded themselves during Titan's time began to emerge from their holes and strut the hallways.
Fifi's term was buoyed by the continued success of the pound's camera donation system, which only grew day to day.
Piggy remained the top star and draw there, bringing in thousands of dollars in each appearance.
His cry of *"Hee Hee!"* after making a mistake became his most popular bit. He repeated it often to tremendous success.
Following in Titan's paw prints, Fifi was easily elected to a second term, once again defeating Rascal who ran a fairly lackluster campaign.
In her acceptance speech she emphasized the need for cooperation between all animals, big and small.
"A rising tide lifts all ships!" she said to great applause, though some cats were taken aback by the idea that they'd ever go near the water.
RASCAL
FIFI
FIFI

Close to the end of her second term, Fifi's popularity was at a high.
NO ONE KNOWS HOW *LONG* A CAT LIVES.
The rabbits appreciated her advocacy on their behalf in keeping the dogs from defecating on their feeding grass.
SOME SAY *TEN* YEARS, SOME *FIFTEEN.*
The dogs, who expected little of cats, were pleasantly surprised at how often their food rations had increased.
I HAVE SEEN *TWENTY AND THREE* YEARS AND FEEL NO CLOSER TO THE END THAN I DID AS A BABE CHASING HIS FIRST *STRING.*
The cats, of course, were thrilled to see one of their own succeed. As much as a cat is ever thrilled at anything.
IT HAS NOT BEEN AN *EASY* LIFE. I HAVE HAD *THREE* OWNERS, SEEN *FIVE* POUNDS.
I HAVE BEEN *SCRITCHED* IN THE MOST PLEASANT OF PLACES.
AND I HAVE *SCARS* FROM FIGHTS I NO LONGER REMEMBER WITH TOMS *LONG* GONE.
It was then that Raven approached her and asked for a moment of Fifi's time.
I AM NOT *ENTIRELY* SURE I GAINED ANY *WISDOM* FROM MY DAYS.
BUT I AM *CERTAIN* THAT I HAVE GATHERED A FEW *STRONG* OPINIONS.

BOTH YOUR WISDOM AND YOUR OPINIONS ARE ALWAYS WEL--
YOU MUST RUN FOR A THIRD TERM.
WHEN YOU WIN, YOU MUST TURN THE ELECTIONS TO ONE ANIMAL, ONE VOTE AND THEN CONTINUE WITH YOUR TERMS FOR AS LONG AS YOU DRAW BREATH.
EXCUSE ME?
YOU HAVE MANY YEARS, YES, BUT NOT HALF OF WHAT I HAVE. YOU HAVE MANY YEARS LEFT.
IN THAT TIME YOU RUN THE POUND WELL, AS YOU HAVE DONE, INCREASING FREEDOM AND WEALTH FOR ALL ANIMALS.
YOU SET AN EXAMPLE THAT MAY BE FOLLOWED. "REMEMBER LUCKY" OR WHATEVER YOU CALL IT. A GOOD LIFE FOR ALL.
THAT IS NOT HOW IT ALL WORKS, RAVEN DEAR.
THERE IS A JUST SYSTEM THAT WAS AGREED TO AND AN EXAMPLE THAT HAS BEEN SET BY THE GOOD DOG TITAN.
THERE ARE NO GOOD DOGS. THERE ARE DOGS THAT ARE HUNGRY AND HAVE FOOD AND THERE ARE DOGS WHO ARE HUNGRY AND DO NOT.
ANY OTHER DISTINCTION IS WORTHLESS.
THOSE ARE THE THOUGHTS OF MEN, PUT INTO YOUR HEAD TO KEEP THE DOORS CLOSED.
WE ARE THE POUND NOW. NOT THEM. OUR HEADS ARE FREE, THE DOORS REMAIN OPEN.
MEN ARE NOT SO DIFFERENT FROM DOGS AS YOU THINK, MADAME FIFI.
THEY ARE ALL ANIMALS.
AND WHAT ARE WE?
NOT THEM.

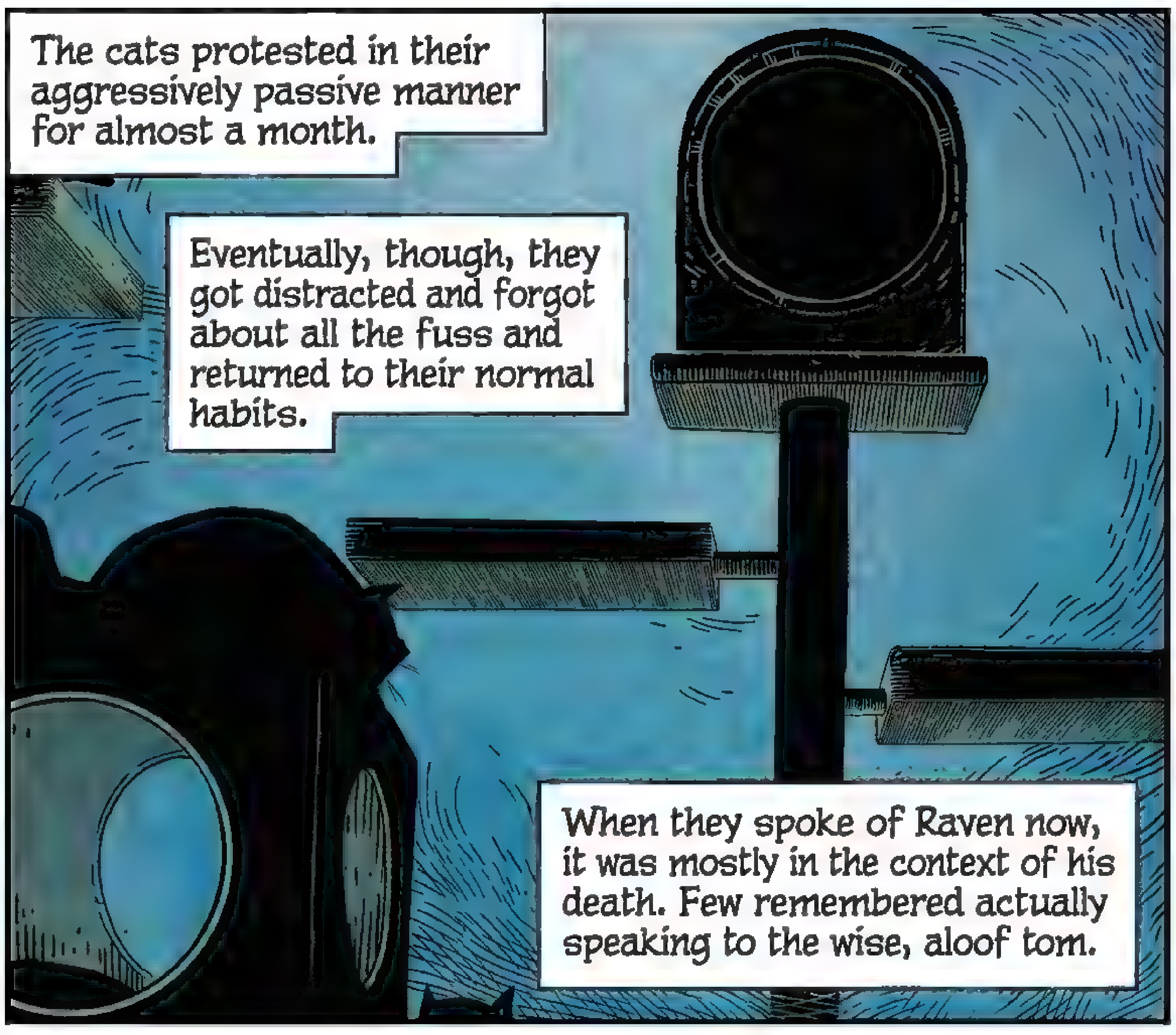
IT IS NOT ALWAYS EFFORTLESS TO BE EQUAL, BUT IT IS RIGHT.
YOUR SYSTEM. DOGS AND CATS AND RABBITS AND POUNDS. WHO SAYS THAT IT IS RIGHT?
WHO EVEN SAYS WHAT IS EQUAL?
WE DO.
THAT IS THE POINT OF EVERYTHING. THAT IS WHAT MAKES IT WORK.
WE LEFT OUR CAGES AND FOUND SOMETHING NEW AND DELIGHTFUL.
SIGH
YOU HAVE HEARD MY WORDS. AND THEY APPEAR TO BE AS TIRED AS I AM.
GO. I WISH TO NAP FOR THE NEXT DAY.
RAVEN, YOUR COUNSEL HAS MEANT A GREAT DEAL TO ME.
DOGS ARE NOT ALWAYS GOOD, I AM NOT NAÏVE, I'M JUST... HOPEFUL.
IS IT SO BAD TO HOPE?
Raven did not respond to Fifi's question and instead drifted into his heavy sleep.
And so Fifi was left to provide her own answer.
She spent the next hours trying to come up with something.
After a while, she was no nearer to success, but felt she perhaps finally understood why dogs chase their tails.

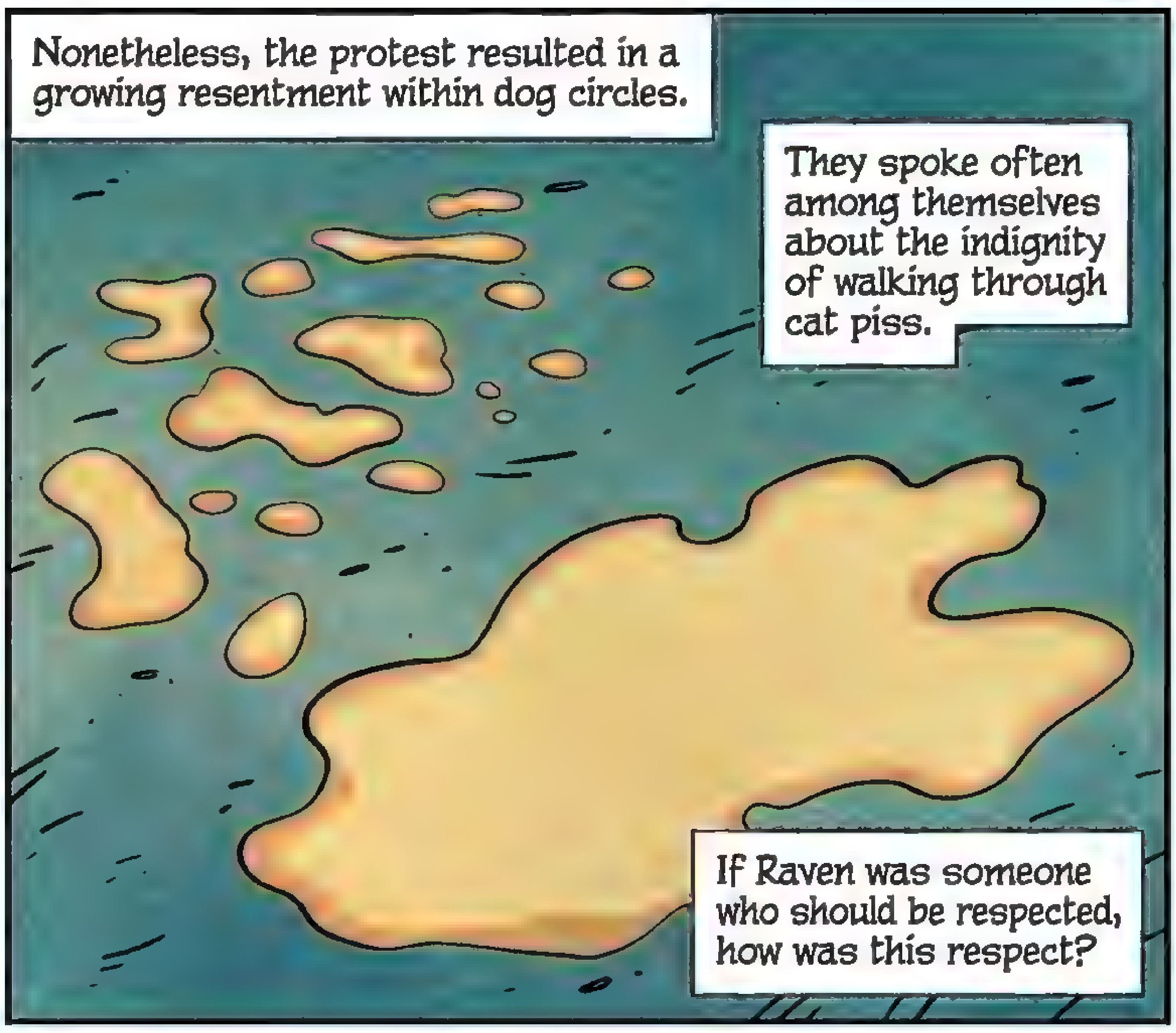
Madame Fifi, second Leader of the pound and the first cat to occupy the office, stepped down upon the completion of her second term.
She oversaw months of growth and prosperity, and she was greeted by praise almost equal to that of her predecessor.
Only a few dogs were heard to rumble that not all was as pleasant as everyone was making it out to have been.
Following Fifi, Rascal the Beagle finally eked out a win when a thin majority of rabbits cast their votes for the dogs' candidate.
The rabbits acknowledged that life had improved under Fifi, but felt that it had not improved nearly enough.
Especially when compared to how much life had changed when Titan first took office.
Some rabbits pointed out that Titan was unique in overseeing the transition to the first free elections, something Fifi could never duplicate.
Other rabbits found this observation obvious and insisted their actual view was not being heard.
Eventually many fights broke out.
The Bunny Wars, as it was mockingly named by the cats, was but one of the many problems that arose during the Rascal administration.
Rascal's attempt to roll back some of Fifi's pro-cat stances on growling resulted in a protest from the cats that found them inappropriately defecating throughout the pound.
Rascal's attempt to mollify the cats then led to the Great Dog Howl, a horrifying din that lasted for hours every day.
Rascal became the first Leader of the pound not to win reelection.
All of the rabbits, all of the cats, and even a majority of dogs went against him.
"Rascal can't even shake" entered the pound lexicon and was heard often and in many contexts.

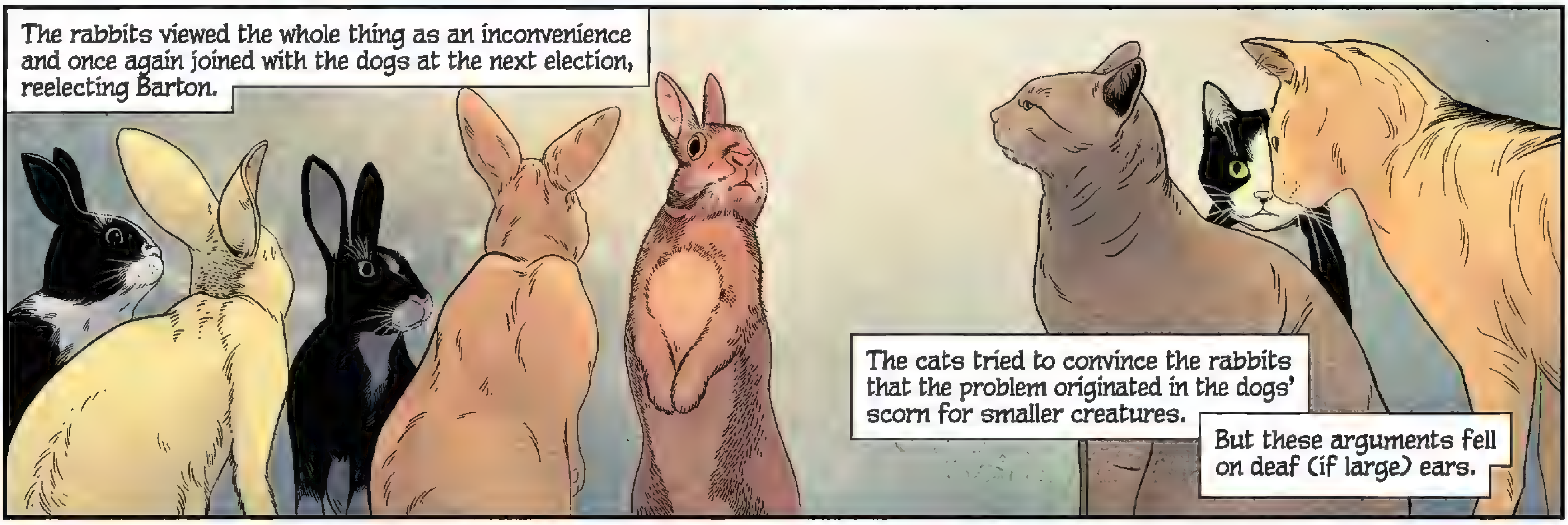
The cat Hercules, who was on the initial constitutional committee, was the fourth member of the pound to assume leadership.
He was not a well-spoken animal or particularly social, preferring a fight or a breeding to conversation.
But he had the support of both Titan and Fifi behind him and won many of their followers to his cause.
Hercules was neither loved nor hated, but seen as an acceptable compromise. Someone who might steer the pound back from the tumult of the Rascal years.
He easily won reelection running against a small Chihuahua named Snickers who was possibly both deaf and blind.
Hercules's term was boosted by an increase in revenue when Piggy debuted his *Piggy Learns Kitten* segment.
The ongoing adventures of the dog attempting to teach tricks to the adorable little ones earned record audiences of humans.
ADO TION
And record revenue for the pound.
Following tradition, Hercules stepped down after his second term shortly after endorsing his successor, a tabby named Tiger.
Tiger was many things Hercules was not, and spent his days gladhanding with dogs, cats, and rabbits alike.
Sadly though, the more people met Tiger, the less they enjoyed her, and so this strategy backfired and resulted in her serving only one term.
The dogs, tired of the long run of cats, united in support of Barton, an old, kind, and often exhausted mutt.
They managed to convince the rabbits that the "Bunny Wars" were long ago and it was time to try something new.
It was during Barton's first term that Raven suddenly passed away from an unidentified illness.

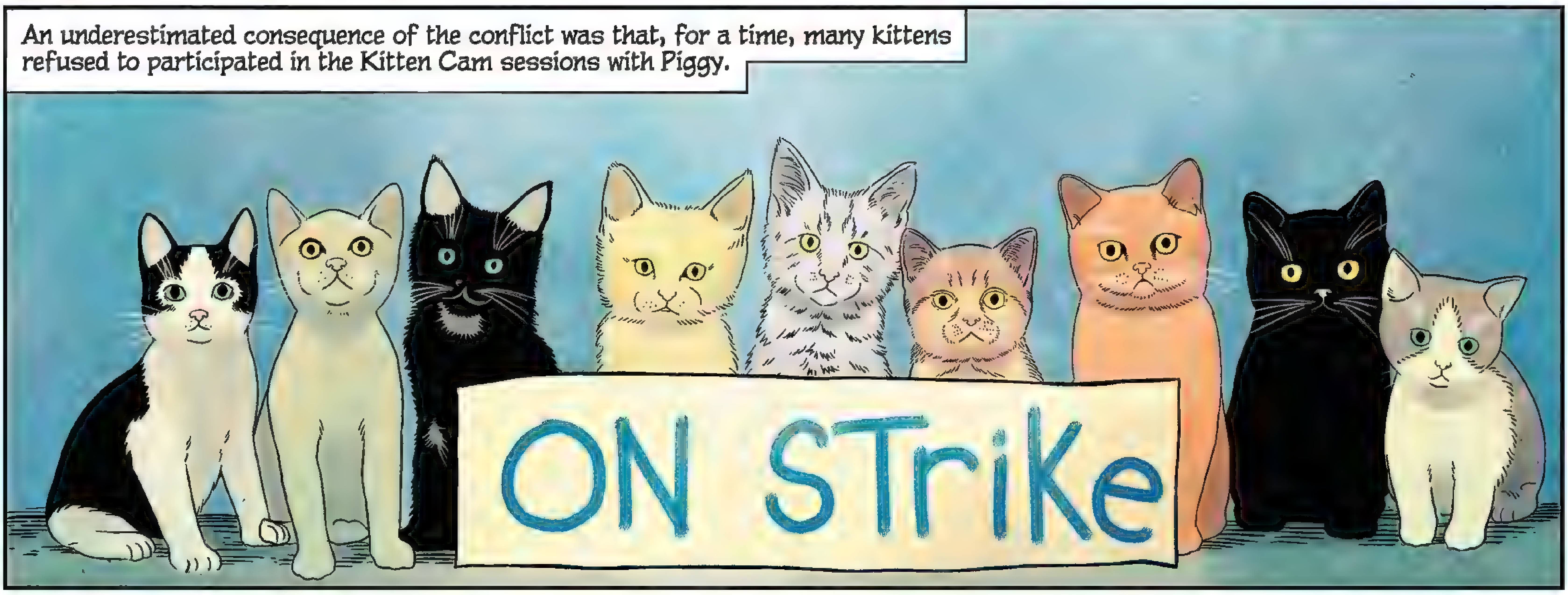
Leader Barton gave the eulogy for Raven, which was seen as proper tribute before the funeral and as a genuine disaster forever thereafter.
Barton was not a gifted orator to say the least. What few words came out of him appeared at great length from one another.
At one time during the ceremony, he became distracted by a fly, which he tried to and failed to crunch, causing him to forget his place and start over.
More and worse, what he said was no better than how he said it.
He paid respect to the cat--who was the oldest in the pound, who had known Lucky, who had sat on the first council--with a number of polite platitudes.
"He was a friendly cat."
"He was a cat of the pound."
"He was a free cat."
This was kind enough, but the cats were well enough aware of Raven's many rebellions and disagreements.
And attempting to capture that iconoclast with clichés insulted them deeper than if Barton had simply listed Raven's many fleas.
Raven was more than this, they knew.
He was not a declawed house cat lapping at milk. He was an outside cat. A scrapper.
And what started as small resentments among the felines soon fired into anger.

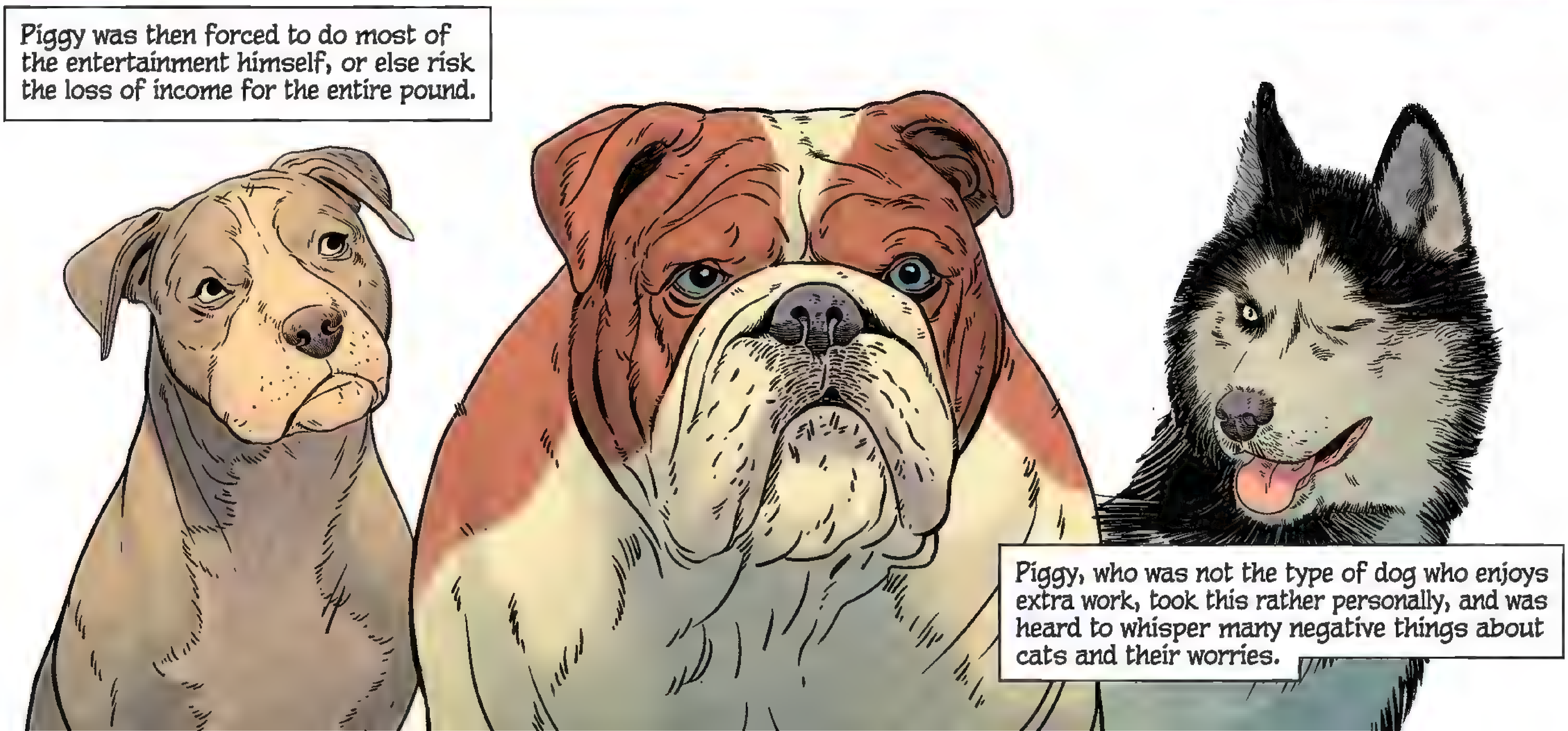
YOU NEED TO CONTROL YOUR PEOPLE.
I'M AS RETIRED AS YOU ARE, GOOD DOG.
YOU HAVE YOUR BOY IN OFFICE, LET HIM DO HIS WORK.
IF I WANTED TO PLAY GAMES, I WOULD CHASE A STICK. THEY ARE CATS, YOU ARE A CAT.
THEY MUST POOP IN THEIR LITTER BOXES AND KEEP THEIR CATERWAULING TO A LIMIT.
THEY ARE CAUSING MORE PROBLEMS AND SOLVING NONE.
WE ARE PRIDEFUL.
THIS IS A LESSON THAT IT APPEARS YOU MUST BE TAUGHT OVER AND OVER.
DOGS LEARN FROM TREATS. THESE ARE SMACKS.
THEY RAISE OUR DANDER. THEY MAKE US NERVOUS.
AND A NERVOUS DOG CAN BE DANGEROUS.
THREATS?
I AM TRYING TO HELP YOUR PEOPLE!
MMMMM.
THIS DISCUSSION BORES ME, GOOD DOG.
THEY MOURN RAVEN IN THEIR WAY. AND I SHALL MOURN HIM IN MINE. BY TAKING THE NAP HE NO LONGER CAN.
REMEMBER LUCKY.
MM.
YES.
REMEMBER LUCKY.


The cats protested in their aggressively passive manner for almost a month.
Eventually, though, they got distracted and forgot about all the fuss and returned to their normal habits.
When they spoke of Raven now, it was mostly in the context of his death. Few remembered actually speaking to the wise, aloof tom.


Nonetheless, the protest resulted in a growing resentment within dog circles.
They spoke often among themselves about the indignity of walking through cat piss.
If Raven was someone who should be respected, how was this respect?


The rabbits viewed the whole thing as an inconvenience and once again joined with the dogs at the next election, reelecting Barton.
The cats tried to convince the rabbits that the problem originated in the dogs' scorn for smaller creatures.
But these arguments fell on deaf (if large) ears.


An underestimated consequence of the conflict was that, for a time, many kittens refused to participated in the Kitten Cam sessions with Piggy.
ON STrike


Piggy was then forced to do most of the entertainment himself, or else risk the loss of income for the entire pound.
Piggy, who was not the type of dog who enjoys extra work, took this rather personally, and was heard to whisper many negative things about cats and their worries.

Barton stepped down at the end of his second term.
He was seen as a jovial if ineffective leader. Admired and even at times loved, but rarely respected.
To replace him, the dogs and rabbits again united to elect Mugs, a Spaniel with a quick temper who was fairly social but not particularly clever.
Mugs began his tumultuous tenure by repealing some of the mild restrictions on dogs that went back to Fifi's administration.
Dogs could now bark and run around in spaces once reserved for quieter animals.
This caused a great deal of discontentment for both rabbits and cats.
Soon a fight broke out between the dog Brisket and a young cat Fruity-Loo, who was once a star kitten on the cam.
Fruity-Loo did the most damage, scratching across Brisket's nose and drawing blood.
Many have wondered at her courage--many more have wondered at Brisket's restraint, for he might easily have mauled his small opponent.
This was the first violence against any of the animals since the revolution, and it was unclear what the punishment would be for Fruity-Loo.
The pound was again split. Cats argued that the puss was defending himself. Dogs demanded nothing less than justice.
The leaders of the pound met on numerous occasions, but it was agreed that Mugs had sway in this matter.
In the end, it was decided that Fruity-Loo would be given a warning. If such activities continued, there would be "stark consequences."
Many animals believed Titan the good dog, who often preached compromise, influenced Mugs's decision.
Very few animals were satisfied with this outcome.

Soon after the scratching of Brisket, a huge storm came upon the pound.
ADOPTION
The rumble of thunder upset many of the dogs, and they spent the night hours running around in a panic.
The cats observed their large friends' failure of nerves with some distaste.
A few of them laughed at the dogs' distress and called out to them that there was nothing to be afraid of.
It was only the sky. You're worse than the rabbits.
This condescension did not go unnoticed.

The division between cats and dogs had created an almost unhinged atmosphere in the pound.
I AM *PIGGY!* YOU KNOW ME AS A *TALENTED* ENTERTAINER!
BUT YOU ALSO SHOULD KNOW I'M *MORE* THAN THAT!
Many called for a restoration of the earlier glory days, a discontent that put Mugs's chances of a second term in serious jeopardy.
I WAS THERE AT THE *REVOLUTION!* I WAS A LOOKOUT! I *HELPED!*
Desperate, Mugs took the unusual step of seeking an endorsement from Piggy, who was much appreciated in the pound.
I BELIEVE IN THE *POUND!* IN THE *DREAM OF LUCKY!* THE *DOG* LUCKY!
After all, Piggy was still the most popular cam star and still brought in the most money.
AND BECAUSE OF WHAT *I* BELIEVE, *I'M* EXCITED TO SUPPORT A GOOD DOG WHO SUPPORTS *ME!*
As he was so very fond of reminding anyone who asked. Or who did not ask.
MY OWN *PERSONAL* FRIEND AND *YOUR* LEADER...
MUGS!

Unfortunately, it was all too little and all much too late.
Mooky, a British Shorthair mix, won unanimous approval from the cats and a sizable majority of the rabbits.
Mooky, who many identified, rightly or wrongly, as a bastard daughter of Raven, was perhaps the shrewdest of all the cats.
She immediately went about trying to heal divisions between the animals, promising and delivering more for cats, dogs, and rabbits.
In general, the situation improved in the pound, or if not improved, returned to some semblance of normality.
Tension between the animals seemed to decrease as Mooky found a delicate balance in bringing more services to everyone.
She was easily elected to a second term.
However, there were some among the dogs who felt that recompense had not been proffered for the meanness the cats had shown in previous years.
They were heard to replace the common saying *"Remember Lucky"* with the baser *"Remember the Storm."*
This terminology was first noticed by the cats and the rabbits when Piggy blurted out the phrase during one of his tapings.
HAPPY NEW YEAR!
The humans watching and donating obviously had no idea of its significance.

I'M SLEEPING, CAT.
THAT IS THE RIGHT OF THE OLD. THAT AND HUNGER. MY KINGDOM FOR A TREAT.
THEY CALL THEMSELVES "STORMERS," THE FOOLS.
YES. AND LIKE THE THUNDER, THEY TOO WILL PASS.
HOPEFULLY THEY APPRECIATE THE IRONY AS THEY DO.
THEY DO NOT CARE FOR THE DREAM, ONLY FOR THEMSELVES...
AND THAT PIGGY, DOING HIS DITZY ROUTINES...
I REMEMBER THE REVOLUTION. I REMEMBER WHAT ROLE THAT SQUEALER PLAYED...
PIGGY IS NOT A SERIOUS DOG.
DO NOT THEN TAKE HIM SERIOUSLY.
STORMERS! WHAT DOES THAT EVEN MEAN?!
WE ARE ANIMALS. WE ARE DOGS OR CATS OR RABBITS, BUT WE ARE ALL ANIMALS!
IT MEANS THEY WERE TREATED POORLY.
PERHAPS TRY TO TREAT THEM WELL.
WERE WE TREATED WELL?! WERE THE RABBITS?!
DOGS ARE GIVEN EVERY ADVANTAGE IN THIS WORLD! THEY ARE BIGGER AND STRONGER AND...AND STILL RAVE, DEMANDING MORE!
HOW COULD I POSSIBLY TREAT THEM TO MAKE THEM SIMPLY GLAD TO BE EQUAL?!
THE POUND IS BUILT WELL. THE DOORS REMAIN OPEN.
NO STORM CAN CHANGE THIS.
REMEMBER LUCKY.

Surprising most, Piggy declared himself a candidate in the next presidential election.
"A better pound for better animals!" he declared.
Surprising all, he rose quickly in popularity.
His long time spent at the cam was praised by dogs, yes, but also cats and rabbits, who knew his success had helped the pound immensely.
And it was difficult to overlook his charisma, which was distinctly goofy but ever-present, unlike many seekers of political office.
Though he espoused views that differed little from the most extreme dogs, he was generally seen to be a friend to cats.
After all, had he not spent the last years playing with kittens on camera? How could a dog do that and hate cats?
Also, he was a member of the original animals responsible for the revolution. In fact, he played a crucial role that day.
His once well-publicized use of *"Remember the Storm"* generally went uncommented upon.

Still, Piggy won the election by less than what was expected--by a hair, in fact.
In the end, the cats voted for cats and many rabbits still held fears about Piggy's past connections to some of the crueler dogs.
The votes and weighing went well into the night. Piggy was said to be shaken by how close it all was.
Unlike all of his predecessors, Piggy did not make a speech upon his ascent to office.
THE DOORS WILL REMAIN OPEN
Instead, he declared that the cam room was to be his "office," and he retreated there to consider his affairs of the state.
Previous administrations had operated in the open, and many wondered at this break in tradition.
It must be admitted, though, that the very oddness of this beginning had its own thrill among the animals.
In some ways the pound--its successes and failures--had become routine.
It changed now and then, but in small ways. This new Piggy... who knew what to expect--and how thrilling that was!
The rabbits did not join their fellow animals in this merriment.
As is the gift of their kind, they sensed danger before it came and huddled in the grass outside, eating as much as they could.
The dogs and the cats thought this too was interesting, and it increased their appetite for speculation as to what Piggy would do.
Piggy himself gave no indication of his intentions for weeks.
KEEP OUT

When finally he emerged, the Bulldog defied all expectations and spoke neither to the collective pound nor even to his loyal dog constituents.

Instead, he went by himself into the backyard, walking at a determined, steady pace.

Word spread quickly, and animals left their nooks and play to come and watch Piggy's mysterious march.

Like the millions of men and women who tuned in each day for the Kitten Cam, they expected Piggy to make a fool of himself in some spectacular way.

They whispered among themselves, guessing at what he would do next.

Piggy knew he was once again the center of attention, which to him was a natural and wonderful thing.

And so, just before he bit down into the rabbit--
--before the loud bleatings of the young one's death cry shot out--
--everyone in the yard still got to hear that familiar, famous catchphrase:
HEE HEE!

CHAPTER FOUR

Titan's Bad Day

Many dogs will break their prey's neck before they gouge out the meat.
EEEEE!
Some say this practice is done out of respect.
The hunted have been caught. They have a right to silence.
Others claim it is a matter of simple practicality.
A squirming feast can impede a meal's joy.
Better to have the food lay still as the bones and gristle are savored.
Most, though, believe the practice is purely instinctual.
A vestige of a time when wolves ran free.
HEE HEE!

THIS IS UTTER *MADNESS!*
IT'S...IT'S AGAINST THE LAW!
WHAT *LAW?*
WHAT KIND OF *NONSENSE* IS THAT? *YOUR* LAW! THE LAW OF THE *GOOD BOY, TITAN!*
RECOMMENDED BY *CONGRESS!* ESTABLISHED ON *YOUR* FIRST DAY IN OFFICE!
WELL.
I AM NO LONGER *IN* OFFICE.
THIS IS THE *TRAGEDY* WITH YOU DOGS!
EVEN IN YOUR *STUPIDEST* MOMENTS YOU NEED TO BE *CUTE!*

YOU ARE ANGRY WITH PIGGY AND SCREAMING ACCUSATIONS AT ME.
IS THIS FAIR? IS THIS YOUR JUSTICE FOR WHICH YOU'RE FOREVER BADGERING?
WHAT ARE YOU RAMBLING ABOUT?!
DO YOU NOT SEE? I AM DANCING ON A BAKING TIN ROOF TRYING TO ENSURE THAT THIS POUND REMAINS TRUE TO LUCKY'S VISION!
THIS IS ALL I EVER DO!
YOU WANTED ME TO STOP HIM!
THAT IS WHAT YOU ARE TRULY ASKING. WHY I DID NOT?!
YOU ARE ACCUSING ME OF KILLING THE DAMN RABBIT!
RRRRR
TITAN, I WAS...YOU CANNOT...
I DID NOT MEAN TO...
YES, IN OUR LOWER MOMENTS, WE DOGS WIDEN OUR EYES AND RETREAT INTO THE ADORABLE.
BUT YOU CATS...
WE ARE CUTE, BUT AT LEAST WE ARE NOT CRUEL.

As the great dog walked away, Fifi recalled their first meeting.
Watching the men as Titan was dragged into his cage.
He was the wildest canine she'd ever seen, roaring back at the attempts to lock him in that small square with only a blanket and a bowl.
She'd never heard a bark so vicious, never seen the humans that anxious, clenching their jaws, sweat dripping off their noses.
Afterward, they shut the gate and zipped away to treat their wounds as Titan growled low and slammed himself upon the metal.
Accomplishing nothing but noise, he tried again, coiling his lean body down into the concrete, then springing forward.
Fifi was sure the mad dog would hurt himself. She could hardly watch.
But hardly was not actually, and for hours she peered through her hole and witnessed the fool launch himself into frustration again and again.
And again.
Finally, bloodied and exhausted, Titan backed into the corner of his cell and howled, long and hard.
It went on the rest of the night. Fifi thought it would keep even her awake, but she was a cat from her whiskers to her tail.
She found her rest even among the din of his mourning.
Titan
After sunrise, she woke and found him huddled in the corner, glaring at the bars separating him from the world.
Being but a new-born kitten and not knowing the old-dead rules dictating the relationships of dogs and cats, she called down to him and asked if he was all right.
Titan

Piggy's first address to the animals was well attended.
His mysterious rise and his obviously lawless actions were the talk of every beast in the pound.
They were all eager to see what he had to say next.
Would he deny, would he avoid, would Titan bite his neck off?
Whatever it was, it drew attention.
WILL REMAIN OPEN
GOOD BOY!
HELLO, ***EVERYBODY!***
LOOK AT ***EVERYONE*** OUT THERE! SO MANY OF YOU! ***WOW!*** ISN'T THAT ***AMAZING?!***
IT SEEMS LIKE WE'VE BEEN ***SO*** DIVIDED, AND HERE WE ARE ***TOGETHER!*** ALL OF US! ***WOW!***
THEY SAID IT ***COULDN'T*** BE DONE, AND THEY SAID ONLY ***I*** COULD DO THIS! I TOLD THEM ***I*** COULD!
AND WE ALL SEE THEY WERE ***RIGHT! I*** WAS RIGHT! LOOK AT ***YOU!*** LOOK AT WHAT ***I*** DID!
AND HERE ***WE*** ARE! AND WE'RE ONLY AT THE ***BEGINNING!*** YES WE ***ARE!***
HEE HEE!

EVERYONE ONLY WANTS TO TALK ABOUT THE BIG THING, I KNOW. I KNOW YOU!
PIGGY AND THE RABBIT!
THAT'S ALL ANYONE IS TALKING ABOUT! I HEAR IT!
GOOD BOY!
AND WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME THE WHOLE POUND TALKED ABOUT THE SAME THING?
AND EVERYONE IS SAYING THEY WERE THERE TO SEE IT. THEY'RE ALL BRAGGING!
GOOD BOY!
"DID YOU SEE IT? I WAS THERE. DID YOU SEE WHAT PIGGY DID?"
SOME OF YOU ARE LIARS!
GOOD
BUT I KNOW YOU'RE ALL WONDERING, WHY DID I DO IT? RIGHT?!
"OH NO, PIGGY ATE A RABBIT! CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT?!"
WELL, I'M HERE TO TELL YOU! I AM!
THE POUND IS DYING!
WE ARE ALL AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS! THE DREAM OF LUCKY--MY DREAM--IS BEING FORGOTTEN!
IF WE CONTINUE ALONG THE PATH WE'RE ON, THE MEN WILL RETURN! THEY WILL!
AND THIS TIME THEY WON'T WAIT TO PUT NEEDLES IN US AND KILL US! ALL OF YOU DEAD!
IF WE ARE GOING TO SURVIVE, WE MUST GO BACK TO THE SPIRIT OF THE REVOLUTION!
AND THAT SPIRIT IS A WILD SPIRIT, EVERYONE KNOWS THAT, IT IS TRUE TO WHO YOU ARE AS ANIMALS!
I KNOW BECAUSE I WAS THERE! FROM THE STARTING LINE! I WAS AN ANIMAL!
GOOD
IF WE STOP BEING WHO WE ARE, WE COULD BECOME JUST LIKE THEM!
LIKE THE HUMANS! AND DO YOU WANT TO BE LIKE THE HUMANS?! DO YOU?! I DON'T KNOW!
I DIDN'T FIGHT FOR THAT! IS THAT WHAT YOU FOUGHT FOR?! IS THAT WHAT I FOUGHT FOR?!
LET'S BE WHO WE ARE!
LET'S BE ANIMALS, I SAY! LET'S BE ANIMALS!

No one in the pound had ever heard anything like this speech before.
Their first response was to twist their necks in confusion.
Piggy did not seem to notice their concern--or if he did, he did not acknowledge it.
Instead, he simply repeated himself, shouting into the quiet of the room:
OPEN
GOOD BOY!
LET'S BE ANIMALS AGAIN!
As this continued, Madame Fifi, who sat with her cats, was at a rare loss for words. It was a meaningless phrase. Surely even Piggy would know how silly he sounded?
ANIMALS! LET'S BE ANIMALS!
And yet on it went.
ANIMALS! LET'S BE ANIMALS!
On and on.
LET'S BE ANIMALS AGAIN!
And on.
LET'S BE ANIMALS AGAIN!

Until...
YES! LET'S BE ANIMALS AGAIN!
LET'S BE ANIMALS AGAIN!!
LET'S BE ANIMALS AGAIN! LET'S BE ANIMALS AGAIN!
YES! YES!
REMEMBER LUCKY! REMEMBER LUCKY!
GOOD BOY!
LET'S BE ANIMALS AGAIN!
REMEMBER LUCKY!
LET'S BE ANIMALS AGAIN!
REMEMBER LUCKY!

In the weeks after Piggy's speech, much in the pound returned to normal.
Which was a shock to almost everyone.
Piggy's bizarre and unjustified actions--his yawping and frothing--seemed surely to promise mayhem.
But for the most part, the animals, who were united in their love of routine if nothing else, went about their days just as they had before.
The rabbits obviously approached each moment with even more caution than usual.
But as rabbits already live their lives in a powerful state of dread, it was difficult to notice the difference.
The stretch of becalmed conventionality was sadly interrupted one afternoon.
A young rabbit named Nighty-Night was romping down the hallway on the way to a pre-supper snack outside...
...when she encountered two dogs.
Mary and Bernie.

Without a thought, Nighty-Night burst ahead, attempting to sprint past Bernie to the promise of safety outside.
Being locked in a pound for years had taken some of the quick out of Bernie, and when he lunged to bite down on the dashing rabbit...
CHMMP
His jaws found only air.
With the miss, a rush of adrenaline pulsed through the pup, a sense of domination and glee and hunger.
This was a very fine day.
But before Bernie could revel in the glory of the chase, three jagged blades slashed across his nose.
And Bernie yelped out with pain and dismay.
RAWWERWW!
His own blood filled his nostrils, hiding the rabbit's sweet musk.
Bernie pawed at his nose, hoping to clear the way back to the pursuit.

When Bernie finally was able to sniff again, Nighty-Night was gone.
And instead the dog found himself facing Hercules, the legendary tom who had spent quite a few of his lives warring with dogs over the scraps of men.
WHAT IN THE NAME OF ***LUCKY*** ARE YOU DOING?!
It was a new regime.
A new leader.
A new world.
And cackles were raised.
RRRRRRRR
OH, YOU DIDN'T HEAR, ***KITTY-KITTY?!***
WE'RE ***ANIMALS*** AGAIN.

WHEN DID I STOP BEING AN **ANIMAL?!**
PLEASE. **DON'T.**
HOW DOES **THIS** HELP?
WHAT? I SHOULDN'T CARE THAT PIGGY'S SPOUTING THIS **HOGWASH?**
WE ALL KNEW WHAT HE WAS, IS THIS SUCH AN **EPIPHANY?** YOU'RE JUST WASTING **ENERGY.**
YOU MIGHT AS WELL CHASE A **LASER DOT** 'ROUND AND 'ROUND THE FLOOR, EXPECTING TO CATCH A SUCCULENT **RODENT.**
SO **I** CAN'T EVEN **COMPLAIN** NOW?
IS **THIS** WHAT'S HAPPENING?! IN **THIS** POUND?! THAT **I** FOUGHT FOR?!
WHO'S **STOPPING** YOU? JUST... WHAT'S THE **POINT?**
THERE WAS AN **ELECTION,** THEY CHOSE THIS **DOG.** JUST LIKE THEY CHOSE **YOU** AND **ME.**
THE **NEXT** ELECTION, THEY'LL NOW **KNOW** HE'S A LOON AND GET **SOMEONE ELSE.** HOPEFULLY AND APPROPRIATELY A **CAT.**
I **AM** AN ANIMAL. I **NEVER** STOPPED BEING ONE.
HE HAS NO **RIGHT** TO SAY IT.
NO, **MADAME,** HE HAS **EVERY** SINGLE RIGHT.
ISN'T **THAT** WHAT YOU SO **FAMOUSLY** SCRATCHED AND FOUGHT FOR?
HE CANNOT **CLOSE** THE DOOR ON YOU, AS **YOU** CANNOT ON HIM.
HAVE YOU TOLD **PIGGY** THAT?
HAVE YOU TOLD HIS **DINNER?**

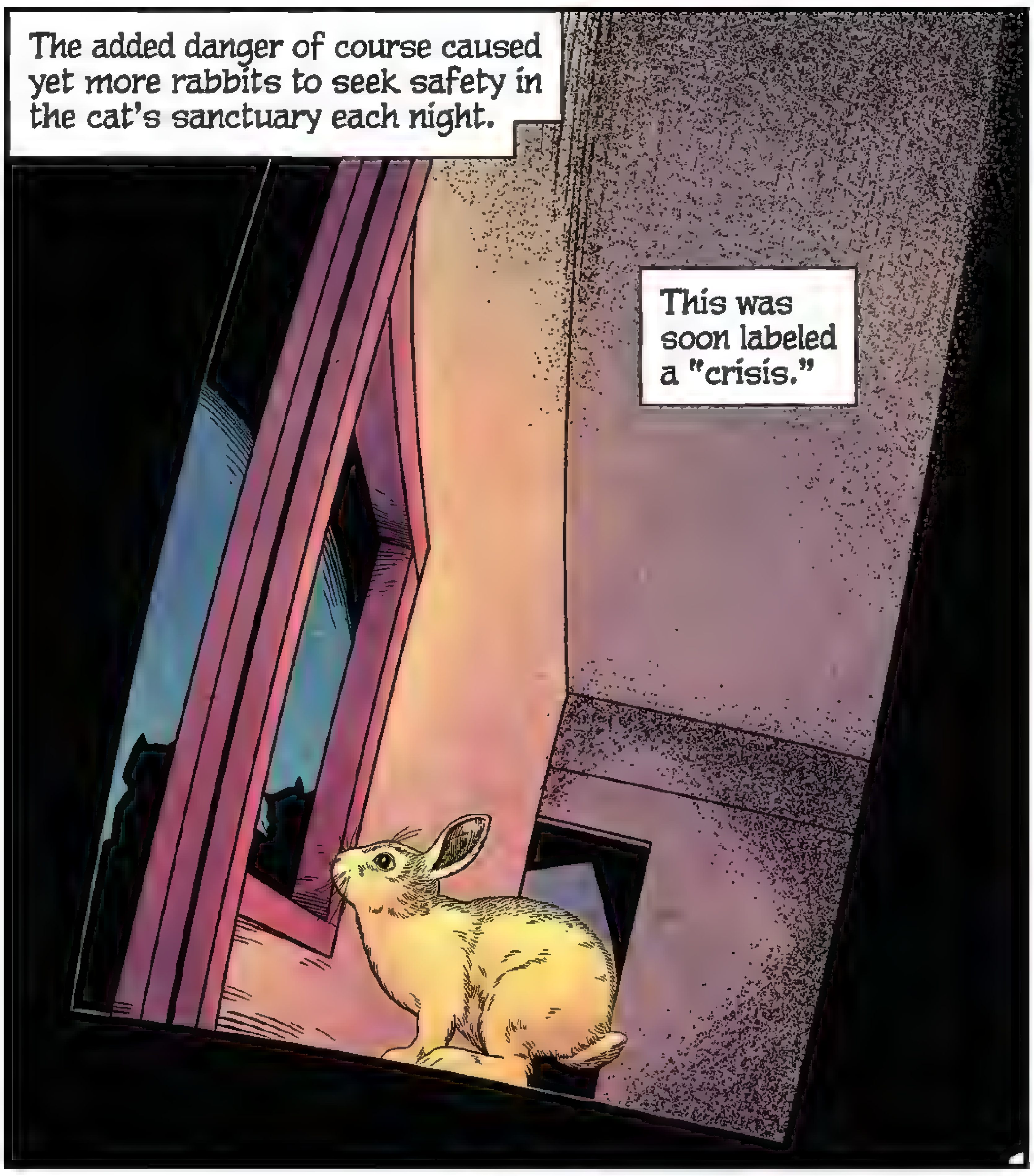
After what Piggy called "Nighty-Night's Adventure," more and more rabbits sought sanctuary in the cats' play area.
Most cats assumed such a change would last for just a short while until the dogs again settled down, but it went on for days, then weeks.
As the cats too had grown cautious and were relying more on this refuge, conditions were tight, to say the least.
The unkempt fur and earthy smell of the rabbits--who spent their days in the wet grass outside--were alien to the more fastidiously clean felines.
Throughout each night, the cats and rabbits would subtly kick and prod one another, trying to find more space to stretch into their dreams.
During the day, the cats whispered to one another of their discomfort with the ongoing situation.
The dogs had committed the sins, they noted to each other, but the cats were left with the ungainly consequences.
If anything, the dogs had more room now, were more comfortable, were more placated, while us cats...
Some of the objectors came to Fifi and asked if it might be better if they just shut the door to the room, keeping both rabbits and dogs away.
Fifi did not even bother to answer this grotesque suggestion.

THERE ARE *TOO MANY* RABBITS.
IT'S NOT *MY* FAULT.
Eventually, as this challenge mounted, Fifi decided she needed to speak directly with Piggy and work out a way forward.
THE *RABBITS* WOULD SAY THERE ARE TOO MANY *DOGS* AND *CATS.*
THEY HAVE *JUST* AS MANY OPINIONS AS *YOU* DO.
Having spent some time with Piggy since the revolution, Fifi's hopes were not high.
YOU KNOW, KITTEN, SOME *RABBITS* COME RIGHT TO ME SOMETIMES AND *THEY* SAY THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM.
ONE *HUNDRED* PERCENT TRUE.
THERE'S ONLY *SO* MUCH GRASS IN THE YARD. YOU *KNOW* THEY DON'T EAT KIBBLE.
Still, she remembered Lucky, remembered the equality of all animals large and small...
I...KNOW WHAT RABBITS *EAT,* SIR. WE *ALL* DO.
BUT JUST BECAUSE--THEM LIVING IN *FEAR* DOESN'T *SOLVE* ANYTHING.
I MEAN, WE HAVE *LAWS.*
...and sought to honor that memory by at least trying her best to be civil.
WAIT, WAIT, HAVE *YOU* THOUGHT ABOUT THAT? BECAUSE *I* HAVE, AND AREN'T LAWS SUPPOSED TO SOLVE *PROBLEMS?* THINK ABOUT *THAT!*
ME, PIGGY, *I* WANT TO SOLVE THINGS, *THEY* WANT ME TO SOLVE THEM. THEY KNOW ONLY I CAN, RIGHT? THEY SAY THAT *TO* ME ALL THE TIME, ALL THE TIME.
SO... *WHAT?*

WOW, SIR, JUST WOW! THAT WAS THE BIGGEST AUDIENCE YET! A RECORD-BREAKER FOR SURE!
TWICE WHAT MITTENS DID LAST WEEK! AT LEAST TWICE! PROBABLY MORE!
DID YOU HEAR THAT?! NOT SO SURPRISING! BUT STILL PRETTY NICE! I THINK THAT'S RIGHT.
BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE, HUH? NOT SO SURPRISING!
MR. LEADER, WE NEED TO COME TO SOME DECISIONS HERE.
WE CAN'T HAVE...THINGS THAT ARE GOING...CAN'T CONTINUE AS THEY ARE NOW.
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU.
THERE ARE TOO MANY RABBITS.
I...
MR. LEADER, I DON'T...
WHAT EXACTLY DOES THAT MEAN?!
HEE HEE!

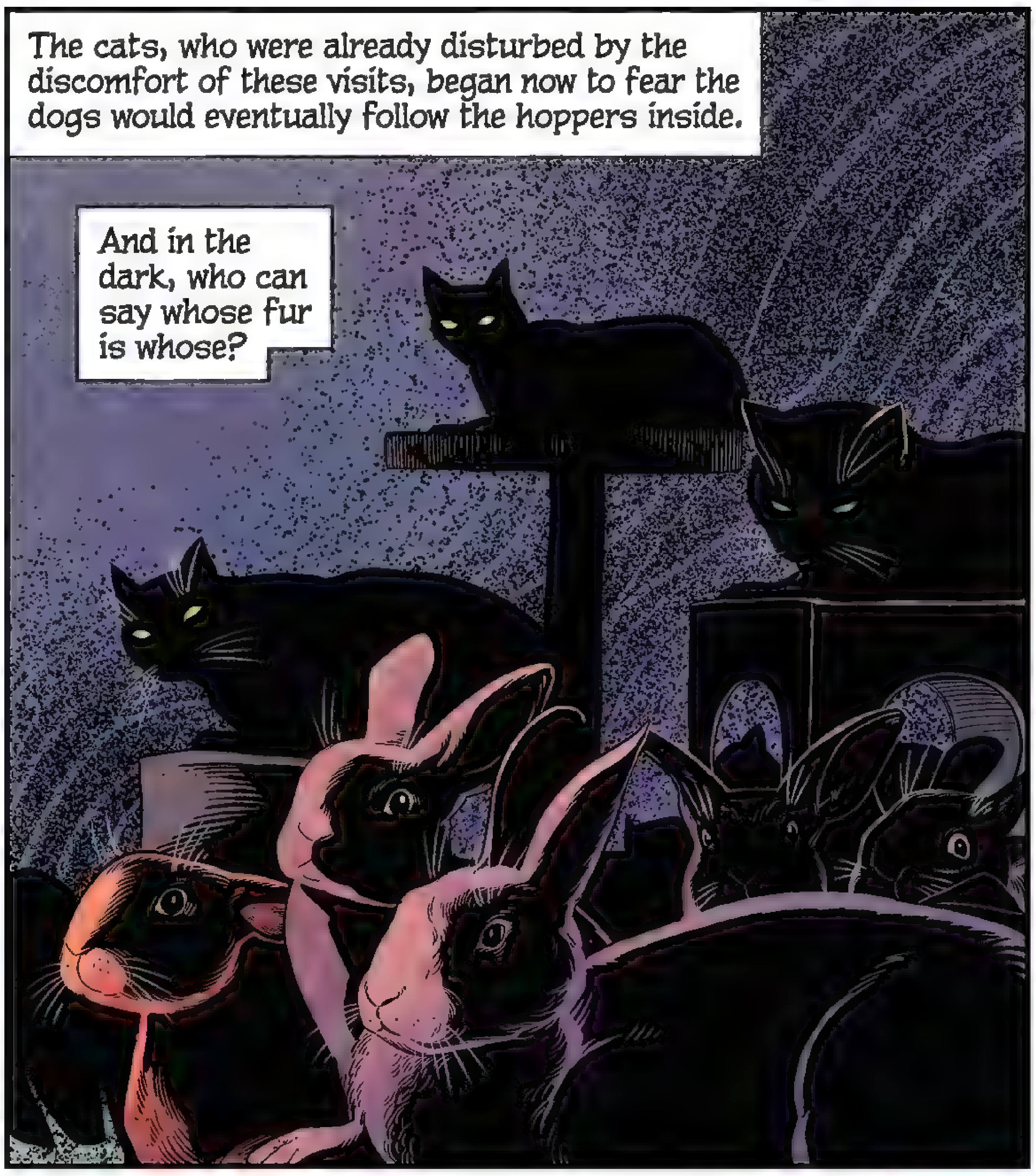
YOU COULD'VE SAID...I DON'T KNOW...
SOMETHING? ANYTHING?! MAYBE JUST A GRUNT TO BREAK UP THE MONOTONY OF THAT IDIOT.
PIGGY
HE'S CORRECT. THERE ARE TOO MANY RABBITS. THEY MATE LIKE... WELL...
REGARDLESS, THEIR WEIGHT WILL SOON DETERMINE ELECTIONS.
SOON AFTER THAT, THERE WILL BE ONLY RABBITS.
HE IS UTTERLY FARCICAL! ALWAYS WITH THE CAMERA, NEVER THINKING THROUGH ONE CONSEQUENCE!
HE IS TOSSING AWAY OUR ENTIRE HISTORY, AND I'M NOT SURE HE EVEN KNOWS! THE...HE CERTAINLY DOESN'T CARE!
DO YOU REMEMBER HIM AT THE BREAKOUT? HE WAS THE ONE WHO FAILED!
PIGGY IS UNCONVENTIONAL.
AS WAS YOUR DOG LUCKY, I BELIEVE.
STILL, IT IS VITAL THAT WE--
IS THERE A PROBLEM, MADAME FIFI?
WHAT IS...
ARE YOU JOKING?!
IS EVERYTHING A JOKE NOW?!

Piggy never officially reversed Titan's order on the killing of animals.
Such an explicit move would've caused consternation and debate, and many were relieved to avoid such conflict.
In fact, he rarely spoke of the peril the rabbits faced daily.
If asked, he would simply repeat *"Let us be animals again"* and *"Remember Lucky"* and even just his patented *"Hee Hee."*
Though no policy was officially endorsed, no punishments were ever enforced.
(How could they be if the leader himself was an offender?)
And more and more dogs were taking advantage of this situation.
The rabbits did what they could to avoid the onslaught.
They ran and hid and hid and ran.
But dogs are quick and resourceful hunters.
Eventually, blood was being spilled every day.



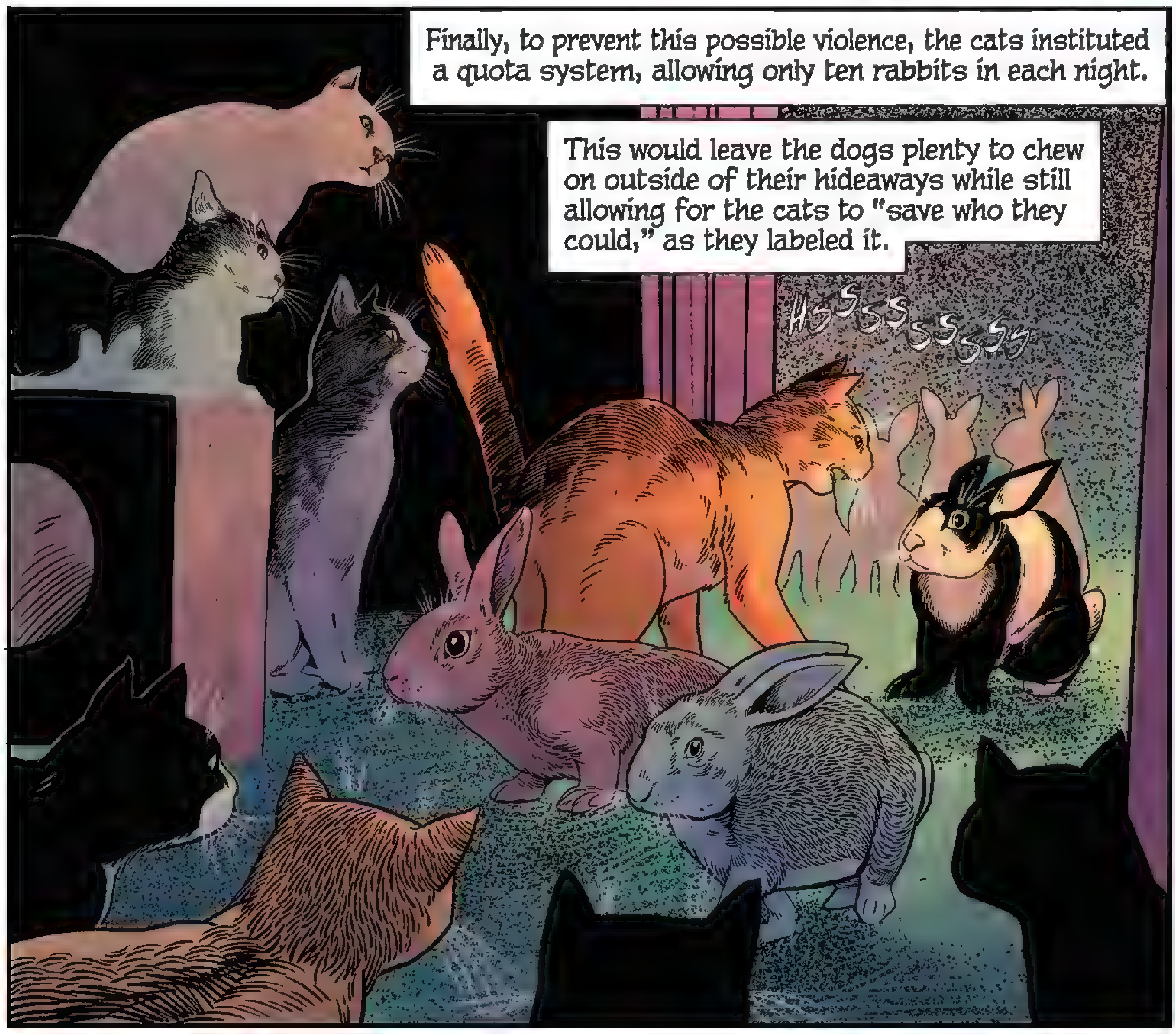
The added danger of course caused yet more rabbits to seek safety in the cat's sanctuary each night.

This was soon labeled a "crisis."



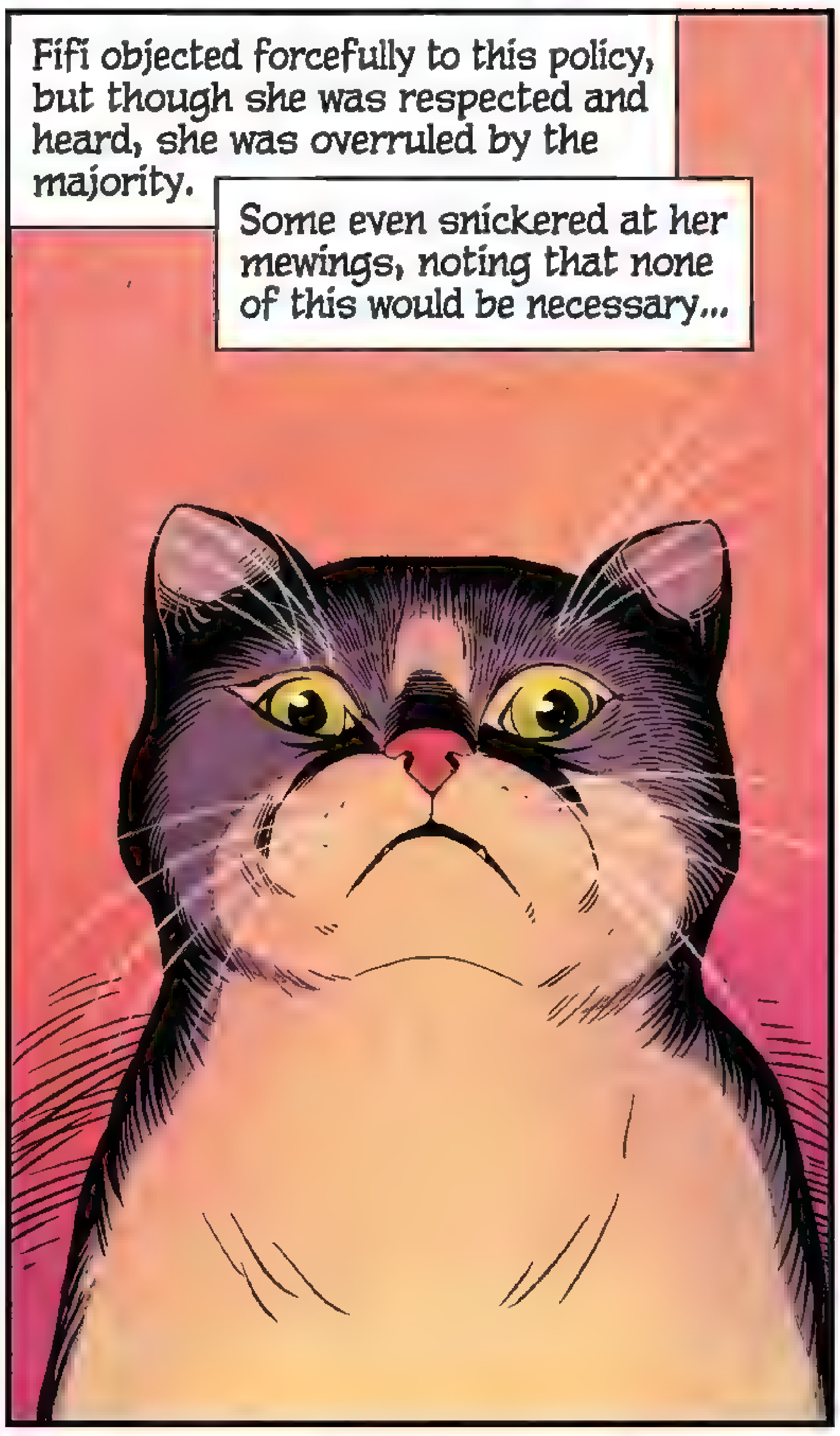
The cats, who were already disturbed by the discomfort of these visits, began now to fear the dogs would eventually follow the hoppers inside.

And in the dark, who can say whose fur is whose?



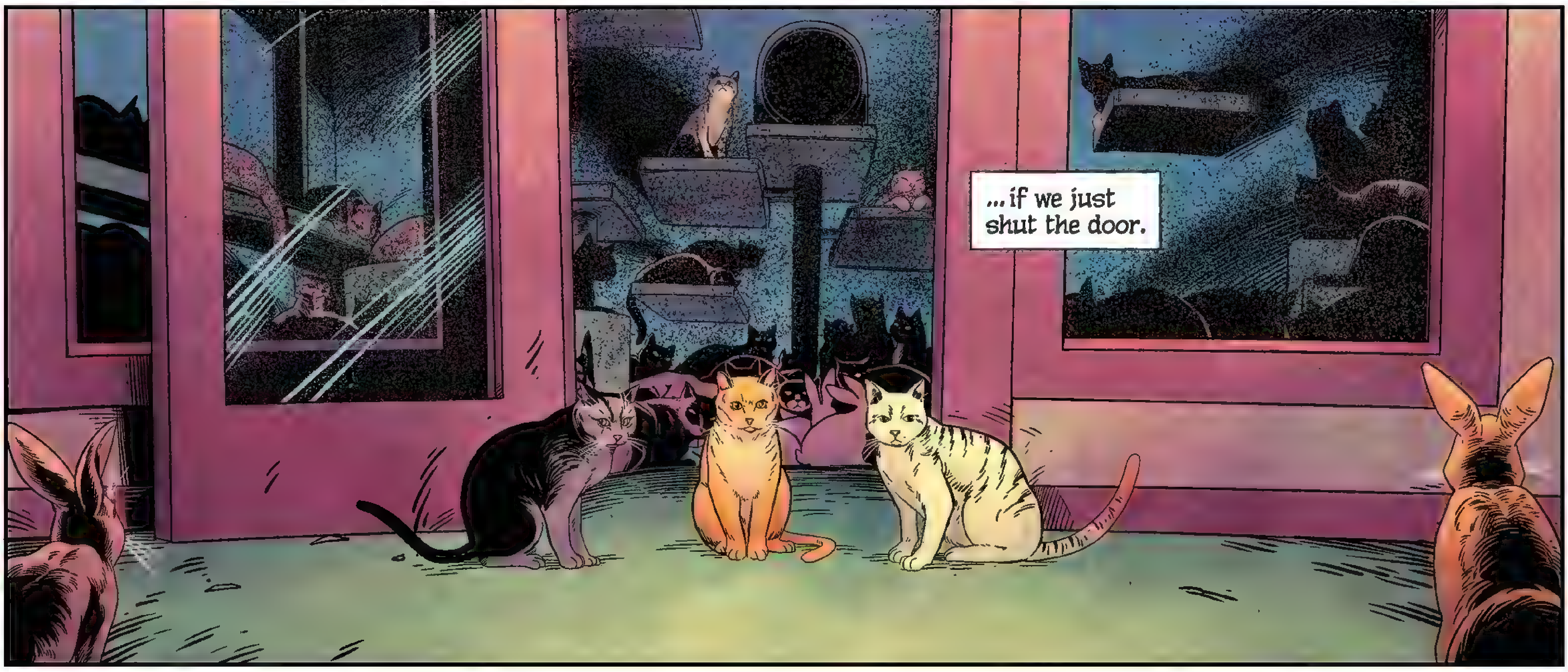
Finally, to prevent this possible violence, the cats instituted a quota system, allowing only ten rabbits in each night.

This would leave the dogs plenty to chew on outside of their hideaways while still allowing for the cats to "save who they could," as they labeled it.



Fifi objected forcefully to this policy, but though she was respected and heard, she was overruled by the majority.

Some even snickered at her mewings, noting that none of this would be necessary...



...if we just shut the door.

THERE IS A LARGER ISSUE AT HAND, MADAME.
IF IT IS THAT I AM DOWN TO ONLY SEVENTEEN HOURS OF NAPS BECAUSE OF ALL THIS WORRY, THEN YOU NEED NOT WASTE YOUR ROUGH TONGUE.
I AM AWARE.
THEY'RE EATING THE RABBITS.
THIS IS PERHAPS EVEN LESS SHOCKING A REVELATION THAN MY TRAGIC SLEEP DEPRAVATIONS.
HERCULES, MY OLD AND DEAR FRIEND, I KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING.
I AM FOREVER STRUGGLING AGAINST IT. WHICH IS ABOUT AS USEFUL AS A BATH OF WATER.
THEY WILL GAIN WEIGHT.

At these simple words, Fifi suddenly bolted to her feet.
As if the dogs were chewing on her tail.
She furtively looked around the room, seeing cats and rabbits sleeping and playing.
Everyone cozy and warm, their thoughts far from the jeopardies outside.
She then peered down at Hercules, who simply returned her stare while keeping his potent silence.
She felt it. All of it.
The pull of the world came from all sides.
Left in the middle, she could not move.
She had been a fool.
The whole time laughing at Piggy.
And she was the joke.
HEE HEE.

MADAME FIFI IS *UPSET.* VERY UPSET.
SHE *REQUESTED* I SPEAK WITH YOU. I FELT IT BEST TO DO IT IN PRIVATE, WITHOUT THE INTERRUPTIONS OF HER CATTY *PANIC.*
CATS ARE *FILTHY.* YOU SEE THEM *POOP* INSIDE A BOX AND WALK AROUND AND IT GETS ON THEIR FEET AND THEY DRAG THE *POOP* ALL AROUND.
I ALWAYS THINK WHEN I *SEE* THEM, ARE THEY GOING TO GET IT ON *ME* NOW?
FIFI FEELS YOUR...THE *TENDENCIES* THAT HAVE ARISEN LATELY UNFAIRLY FAVOR *DOGS.*
IN TERMS OF THE UPCOMING *ELECTION.*
THEY *HATE* ME, TITAN. FOR *BEING A DOG.* FOR BEING AN *ANIMAL.*
THEY'RE *JEALOUS.* BECAUSE *I* DID IT FIRST. *I* MADE ANIMALS HAPPY AGAIN. *EVERYONE* TELLS ME.
LOOK AT *US.* THE CROWDING IS GONE, THE MEN STAY AWAY, THE FOOD IS *PLENTIFUL,* THE CAMERA IS PRODUCTIVE. EVERYONE IS DOING *GOOD.*
I DON'T *DISAGREE,* SIR.
BUT THE *ELECTION* MATTER. IT'S NOT AS SIMPLE AS--
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY'D *DO* TO US? ME AND YOU?! IF *THEY* WIN NEXT TIME? HO BOY.
HOW MANY OF US *ATE?* HOW WILL THEY *TORTURE* US FOR THAT?
I'LL BE FIRST, SURE, THEN IT'LL BE BERNIE AND MARY, THEN IT'LL BE *YOU!*
PLEASE--
THE *NEXT* ELECTION IS OUR *LAST!*

YOU...PIGGY... MR. LEADER.
YOU HAVE TO TRY TO LISTEN. FIFI SAYS--
I DON'T CARE ABOUT A PUSSY AND HER WHINY WHINING!
IF YOU CARE SO MUCH, YOU WANT TO SIDE WITH THOSE FICKLE FELINES, GO, DO IT!
BETRAY YOUR OWN KIND. SHOW HOW YOU VALUE LOYALTY, BAD DOG TITAN!
DO YOU NOT KNOW WITH WHOM YOU SPEAK?
I KNOW CATS ARE CATS, AND RABBITS ARE RABBITS.
EVERYONE KNOWS THAT. AND THEY SHOULD STOP FORGETTING IT.
WHAT I DON'T KNOW, TITAN, IS WHAT ARE YOU?
I...
I REMEMBER LUCKY.
OF COURSE YOU DO. WE ALL DO.
AND DO YOU REMEMBER WHY HE WAS KILLED?
BECAUSE... BECAUSE IT WAS A POUND.
AND THEN... THAT WAS THE ONLY WAY OUT.
NO. NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, NO.
THEY DON'T KILL EVERYONE HERE, DO THEY?
JUST US.
THEY KILLED LUCKY BECAUSE HE WAS A DOG.
LIKE ME. LIKE YOU.

They were old friends, the founding sparks of a revolution.
He owed her an explanation.
But when he attempted to articulate the importance of loyalty in his life...
...the need to stand next to his own kind, the fear of what could come if he did not...
...all that came out was a tiny, wrinkled yowl.
It was not much.
And it was quite enough.
As she walked away he thought to say something else, anything else.
Perhaps just a memory they could share together of their many years building a better world.
That would be nice.
But nothing came.
And Titan bent his head and smelled the grass.
He sniffed in the piss of his fellow animals as the sun warmed his back.

With weeks to go until the election, Fifi gathered the cats together.
WE MUST SHELTER THE RABBITS, ANY WAY WE CAN!
HIDE THEM HERE AND PROTECT THEM IN THE YARD!
EVERY ONE OF THEM! IT IS OUR ONLY OPPORTUNITY!
NO, C'MON, WE FINALLY GOT THEIR NUMBERS DOWN SO WE CAN NAP, AND NOW WE LET THEM BACK IN, ALL OF THEM?!
WE'LL BE UP ALL DAY AND NIGHT WITH THEIR SCRATCHING AND THUMPING! IT'S TOO MUCH!
I AM AWARE OF THE MANY TEMPORARY INCONVENIENCES.
BUT THERE IS NO CHOICE. THE VOTE IS WEIGHTED BY POUNDS. THE FOOD IS THE SAME, BUT IF THE DOGS CONSUME THE RABBITS...
...THIS IS ALL WE CAN DO!
IS IT, THOUGH? GREAT MADAME FIFI?
OR COULD THERE BE PERHAPS ANOTHER WAY? HM?
NO, ABSOLUTELY NOT.
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
I DON'T WANT TO SLEEP WITH THE RABBITS ANYMORE.
YES, YOUNG ONE.
BUT HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT EATING THEM?

HOW **DARE** YOU!
EVERY ONE **WE** EAT IS ONE THEY DO NOT. EVERY POUND **WE** GAIN IS ONE **THEY** LOSE.
WE TOO CAN BE **ANIMALS** AGAIN.
DO YOU **FORGET?** WE ARE **EQUALS.** THE CATS, THE RABBITS, THE DOGS.
THAT IS THE **DREAM.** WITHOUT IT, WE **WAKE** INTO MAN'S WORLD.
WE **WERE** EQUALS, NOW THE DOGS HAVE **MORE.** THANKS TO THEIR **PIGGY.**
AND NOW, WHAT DO **WE** HAVE? WE NEED A PIGGY OF OUR **OWN.**
IS THAT WHO **YOU** ARE NOW? HIM... THAT...THAT... **THING?**
THAT IS HOW **YOU** SEE YOURSELF? NOTHING BETTER THAN A **STRUTTING** GASBAG, **GIGGLING** FOR A CAMERA?
YOU ARE WILLING TO SACRIFICE ALL **DIGNITY** AND COURAGE TO BE...**THAT?!**
I...
FIFI...
HEE HEE!
HEE HEE!
THAT IS NOT--
NO.
SLASH
ROWW!
WE ARE **LIONS** AND WE ARE **KITTENS.**
WE ARE NOT **PIGS.**

The cats did not come to a consensus.
Too many of them objected to the rabbits' ubiquitous presence. Too many of them felt themselves obligated to serve the dream.
Eventually they agreed to a compromise and increased the quota of rabbits allowed in the play area by twenty percent.
It was not nearly enough to stop the now ever-increasing slaughter.
As the election approached, more and more dogs feasted.
And so the canines continued to put on weight as the rabbit population continued to dwindle away.
The cats' efforts, noble and kind as they were, undoubtedly saved some, but in the end accomplished very little.
86.2 LBS
Eventually, the voting began.
Of course, objections were raised, but Piggy overruled them all.
VOTE
As was his prerogative as the duly elected leader of the pound.
In his explanation, he invoked the revolution and Madame Fifi's own Great Bargain.
This is our way, he explained.
Piggy
DOG
Mittens
CAT
The animal way.

The cats and the rabbits voted.
The dogs voted.
Everyone was weighed.
And the winner...
THIS IS A **GREAT** DAY FOR THE POUND AND **ALL** THE ANIMALS THAT ARE INSIDE HERE WITH **ME!**
IN MY FIRST TERM, I TOLD YOU WE COULD LEARN TO BE WHAT WE SHOULD **ALWAYS** BE!
PEOPLE DIDN'T BELIEVE **ME,** THEY SAID **I COULDN'T** DO IT, THEY SAID THAT WE HAD TO GO ON **SHRINKING** AWAY, SMALLER AND SMALLER.
THEY CAME TO ME IN **TEARS** BECAUSE THEY KNEW THE HUMANS WERE COMING. BECAUSE WE WERE ALL **WEAK** AND THEY WOULD **HAVE** TO.
GOOD BOY!
BUT **I** TOLD YOU! I **SHOWED** ALL OF YOU! THAT THE POUND IS WHAT **WE** MAKE IT! **WE'RE** WHAT WE MAKE IT!
AND WE ARE **ANIMALS!**
WE ARE **ANIMALS!**
WE ARE **ANIMALS** AGAIN!

The cats and rabbits vowed to stay away from the inauguration in order to protest what they saw was a clearly unearned victory.
Fifi, however, could not resist her own curiosity, though she knew well the cliché that would damn her for such instincts.
As she would have expected, the dogs were overjoyed.
Tongues bobbed and tails wagged.
And again as she would have expected, Piggy rambled on and on, praising mostly himself and his accomplishments.
Boasting of everything from his courage in the revolution, to his success at the kitten camera, to his prowess in catching the first rabbit.
However, not all was as she thought it would be.
For in the crowd of rapturous listeners, Fifi spied a horrible miracle.
Cats.
Cats.
Cats.
And rabbits.

CHAPTER FIVE

Who's A Good Dog?

LOST & FOUND
ADOPTION
Every day, at around three in the afternoon, a human came to the front door to deliver food that had been purchased online.
And every day, Vlad and Ragon, two enthusiastic mutts, barked and bucked and howled as the man laid his package down on the front steps.
AROOF AROOF AROOF
Such a din rose instinctual alerts throughout the building, and soon animals of all sorts were committed to their own hysteria.
AROOF AROOF AROOF
Vlad and Ragon were scolded often, told over and over that the man was bringing them treats and meant no harm.
And still, the next afternoon, there they'd be--at the window, at the door, in a panic, in a froth.
Scratching and pleading and yelling and whining.
Something should be done.
Everyone said.

Three months after his first reelection, Piggy announced he would run for a third term in office.
Such an action defied convention set forth, by the good dog Titan in the first animal administration of the pound.
(The difference between convention and law was debated by many animals, who never quite settled on an answer.)
Piggy's argument for what he labeled a "minor and needed course-correction" was simple enough.
And once he put it forth it was echoed by all of his followers *ad nauseam.*
"In these halls, the voice of the animals outweighs all other concerns."
They noted. And repeated.
"If everyone wants Piggy, why should some silly old habit stop them?
"Is that fair?
"Is that just?"

Madame Fifi--
--who had endured now eight months of Piggy's rule and was clinging to the hope of its end as only a cat can cling--
--was incensed by this development.
She well understood that the unabated eating of the rabbits had heightened the dogs' weight and reduced the power of the smaller animals.
The chances of a cat victory in the next cycle were smaller than the worms in an old hound's gut.
Still, if *another* dog took the job...
...*any* other dog...
Well, she could not believe that anyone on four legs was worse than the absurdity that was their current leader.
Every canine, it seemed to her, had some innate dignity, even if it was buried behind appetite and ignorance.
With this one notable, piggish exception.
Given another dog, there was a possibility of a return to normalcy.
And with that return, perhaps a way to reverse the present ignoble policies and achieve the balance in weight that was essential to their progress.
Fifi decided she had tolerated enough, and could not tolerate this.
She would do what she had not done in the last months...

...she would talk with the good dog Titan.
For had it not been them at the beginning.
Whispering between cages.
Conspiring in the dark.
Sharing Lucky's dream.

But as she approached her old friend, Fifi found her paws sticking to the grass, her legs stiffening, her body unwilling to inch her any closer.
She stopped and did not understand why.
Searching for answers, her mind whirled.
She saw a dozen combinations of all the conversations she was about to have.
Parades of arguments and jokes and respectful insults.
And at the end of each of them, she heard Titan telling her not to worry.
That Piggy was a moment and they were a movement, and this too would pass.
Best to just let it alone and enjoy the warmed sunlight settling onto your fur.
She could not bear hearing it one more time.
Fifi turned and walked back toward the house where she could get in a quick nap or two before dinner and sleep.
Titan sat in the yard, ignorant of the cat's attempt and retreat.
Breezily unaware that the two old, great friends would never speak again.

WOW! ELECTED TO A THIRD TERM! FIRST TIME ANYONE'S DONE THAT!
CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT?! WOW WOW WOW!
GOOD BOY!
THEY SAID IT COULDN'T BE DONE!
BUT LOOK AT THAT!
THIS IS A GREAT DAY FOR THE POUND!
EVERYONE SAID IT COULDN'T HAPPEN!
I WAS AT THE REVOLUTION, YOU KNOW.
WELL, SOME PEOPLE CALL ME THE HERO OF THE REVOLUTION.
MAYBE THAT'S TOO FAR, TO BE HONEST. COULD BE TOO FAR?
BUT HEY! MAYBE IT'S NOT!
WITHOUT ME, WHO KNOWS WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED TO THIS PLACE.
WOULD THE REVOLUTION HAVE FAILED? I CAN'T SAY. I MEAN, I COULD, BUT I SHOULDN'T!
BUT MAYBE I SHOULD, HUH?
I DON'T LIKE TO BRAG! NO!
YOU KNOW THAT ABOUT ME MORE THAN ABOUT ANYONE.
SO I WON'T TALK ABOUT THAT ANYMORE.
BUT I KNOW YOU ANIMALS LOVE IT.
I MEAN, WHO DID BETTER THAN ME AT THE KITTEN CAM?
AND NOW WHAT ARE WE? ALL ANIMALS. JUST ANIMALS WHO ARE ANIMALS.
WHAT A GREAT DAY THIS IS!
EVERYONE KNOWS IT!

Fifi did not attend Piggy's third inauguration.
Nor was she present at his fourth.
Or fifth.

YES, WHAT *IS* IT?
YOU DIDN'T COME TO *MY* SPEECH.
IT WAS A *BEAUTIFUL* SPEECH. SO MANY ANIMALS ARE SAYING THEY *LOVED* IT. SO MANY TAILS WERE *WAGGING.* MAYBE THE *MOST* TAILS EVER!
I'M *SURE.*
EVERYONE ELSE WAS THERE.
ALL THE CATS AND RABBITS.
RABBITS *LOVE* ME. BIG FANS. BIGGER THAN *DOGS,* SOME SAY. I KNOW, I KNOW, *YOU* WOULDN'T THINK IT, BUT *MAYBE* IT'S TRUE, *I* DON'T KNOW.
YOU CONTROL THE FOOD RATIONS. AND THE *WORST* DOGS LISTEN TO YOU.
EVERYONE WANTS TO *EAT.* AND EVERYONE WANTS TO *NOT* BE EATEN.
DESPERATION ISN'T *LOVE,* IT'S JUST *DEPRESSING.*
YOU HAVE A *FILTHY MOUTH!*

IS THERE ANYTHING *ELSE?*
DO YOU SEE WHERE *YOU'D* BE WITHOUT *ME?!*
IF *I* HADN'T MADE US *ANIMALS* AGAIN?!
YOU AND YOUR *FILTHY CAT LITTER MOUTH!*
OKAY.
WHO *ARE* YOU?!
DO YOU KNOW WHO *I* AM?!
I'M LUCKY'S DREAM!

The next day, Fifi's food supply was cut by two-thirds.
She did not tell anyone of this development.
Though many animals noticed her weight loss over the next few months and guessed easily enough at its cause.
There was a division of opinions among the cats about her insubordination and subsequent punishment.
Some said she was a fighter, an inducement to rebel fitfully against Piggy's seemingly endless rule.
Others said she was causing problems and facing consequences.
That nothing had been gained by her acts and disturbing Piggy would only provoke further outrages.
Fifi did not comment on either side of the debate.
She spent her days dozing, trying not to think about kibble spotted with flecks of genuine tuna.

Later, all the animals of the pound speculated on the connection between Fifi's hunger and the infamous assault on Piggy in the north hallway.
GOOD BOY!
It hardly seemed a coincidence.
But was she the inspiration or the instigator?
It was difficult to make any definitive determination in the matter.
As far as everyone could tell, the two young toms who effected the ambush seemed only to have shared their secrets with one another.
And neither rascal survived the incident long enough to testify as to their motivations and possible fellow conspirators.
After the guard dogs had done their sworn duty, the animals were left only with blood, fur, speculation...
...and a shiny new scar on Piggy's ever-damp snout.
...NN NNN NNNN...

Piggy acted quickly, shouting to everyone that the pound was now in a state of emergency and action must be taken.
THE
First, he canceled the upcoming election, claiming that any vote in the shadow of such violence could not be conducted fairly.
DOORS
This raised few objections, as it was assumed Piggy would have won the election in any case--so what really was lost?
Next, he declared curfews for all rabbits and cats, requiring that non-dog animals remain inside their rooms when not on official approved business.
WILL
It was emphasized that this action was temporary in nature until the extent of this violent intrigue was sniffed out.
Finally, he issued a declaration noting that, because of the unprecedented danger imposed on the freedom of all animals due to this terrorist attack...
REMAIN
"Changes must be made."
The full meaning of the declaration was not at all immediately clear.
OPEN,
Cats, rabbits, and dogs alike spent a great deal of time discussing the myriad of possibilities it presented.
It was not until they woke the next day and treaded through the main hall that they noticed the transformation.
AS
NEEDED
Or edit, rather.

Piggy's initiatives, of course, led to an obvious conundrum.
Doors, with their complicated handles and locks, are not the simplest devices for dogs' paws to manipulate.
It was not beyond the ability of the animals of the pound to solve such a dilemma; they had, after all, cracked the mysteries of the computer.
However, many of the cleverest among them were either gone (as with Raven) or were unwilling to volunteer for the task (as with Fifi).
This left Piggy with few options as to how to implement his new policy.
A policy which he emphasized was necessary if true freedom were ever to be achieved in the pound.
In the end, Piggy, in his own words, bowed down to the traditions upon which this unique polity had been constructed.
SECURITY
He made a compromise.

MADAME FIFI!
DID YOU HEAR?!
MOOKIE WAS ON WATER DUTY AND HE SAID HE HEARD IT FROM A GUARD DOG WHO CAN'T EVER STOP TALKING AND THE GUARD DOG PEDRO I THINK IS HIS NAME I THINK WAS THE ONE WHO TOLD HIM AND HE SAW IT HIMSELF IN--
IRIS, MY DEAR, I AM NOT A MOUSE, YOU ARE NOT ON THE HUNT.
YOU MAY CALM DOWN.
HE SAID, HE SAID, HE SAID...
THE HUMAN WHO DOES THE DOORS WENT OUTSIDE TO SUCK ON ONE OF THEIR WHITE STICKS AND HE WENT INTO THE BACKYARD AND TITAN WAS THERE AND--
TITAN?
YEAH!
AND THE MAN WAS JUST STANDING THERE OUTSIDE AND HE WASN'T EVEN MOVING...
AND...

The human's blood burst into Titan's mouth, electrifying his tongue.
So much had changed over the years.
Everything growing more complex.
Dogs and dreams and cats and talk and rabbits and doors and speeches and leaders and legacies and freedom.
But this.
This was simple. And old. And wild.
And good.
AAAAAH-
CRNNCHHH

SIR, AFTER THE BITING, THE HUMANS SAY NOW IT'S NOT *SAFE* HERE.
THEY ARE THREATENING TO *LEAVE.*
WE ALLOWED THEM TO PLACE *BAD DOG TITAN* IN A CAGE.
BUT THEY INSIST EVEN *THIS* IS NOT TO THEIR SATISFACTION.
SCRTCH
IF THEY DO *GO,* SIR, WE WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP THE DOORS *CLOSED.*
AND...AND... THERE IS SOME CONCERN THAT THE *CATS* HAVE BEEN *EVEN MORE RADICALIZED* IN RECENT MONTHS.
IT'S NOT *CLEAR,* DEAR LEADER...
...THAT WE COULD *GUARANTEE* YOUR SAFETY.
SCRTCH
SCRTCH
SCRTCH
ALSO, *SIR.*
TITAN...
TITAN IS... THE GREAT--THE BAD DOG TITAN IS... ALREADY *YOWLING* THAT YOU SHOULD BE *REMOVED* FROM OFFICE.
GOOD BOY!
WE HAD THE HUMANS PUT A *MUZZLE* ON HIM.
BUT HE WILL HAVE TO TAKE IT OFF TO *EAT.*
SIR.
SCRTCH
SCRTCH
SCRTCH
HEE HEE.

Titan returned to a familiar environment.
He was surprised at how comfortable it was to be back in confinement.
The bowl, the rope, the bars--the frigid, small square of his life.
It seemed to him that the revolution and all that followed had been a fantasy.
As when he used to find himself at night with his eyes closed, chasing a rabbit through a verdant field.
As his leg bucked back and forth on the concrete ground.
This is right, he thought.
This is the way of things, from all the beginnings to all the ends.
Everything else was just a cat's folly.

EVERYONE THINKS YOUR KIND IS SMARTER THAN MY OWN, BECAUSE YOU CAN SIT AND SHAKE AND ROLL OVER.
HAS IT NEVER OCCURRED TO A SOUL THAT THE MORE INTELLIGENT THING TO DO WHEN THE HUMANS DEMAND OBEDIENCE IS TO IGNORE THEM AND NAP?!
I AM TRYING TO SLEEP.
MUST YOU PRATTLE ON?
THEY ARE COMING IN THE MORNING.
DO YOU TRULY EXPECT ME TO LEAVE YOU ALONE AT THIS MOMENT?
I WAS BORN IN A CAGE, PURCHASED AND ABANDONED, SPENT MY YEARS WANDERING STREETS, FIGHTING FOR SCRAPS.
SHIVERING UNDER BUSHES AS THE COLD RAIN FELL AND THE THUNDER ROARED.
UNTIL I WAS RETURNED TO MY ORIGINS.
I HAVE NEVER EXPECTED ANYTHING OF ANYONE.
I SUPPOSE YOU DON'T EVEN EXPECT ME TO MISS YOU.
WHICH AGAIN SHOWS JUST HOW MUCH SMARTER I AM THAN YOU.
MORE WORDS-- WHAT USE ARE WORDS?
JUST ANOTHER WAY TO KEEP ME FROM MY REST.
TITAN, MY GOOD DOG. JUST WHEN I ALMOST GIVE UP ON YOU...
...YOU FINALLY SAY SOMETHING RIGHT.
RRM.
I WILL MISS YOU TOO, MADAME FIFI.
MY FRIEND.

In the morning, a man came to Titan's cell.
CLIK
He opened the door.
He tied on a leash.
The man walked the dog down the corridor.
He opened another door.
ANIMAL DISPOSAL
Which soon closed behind him.

I JUST HEARD, IT *HAPPENED*.
HE'S *GONE*.
WHAT DOES *THAT* MEAN?
IF THE *DOGS* AREN'T SAFE AND THE *RABBITS* AREN'T SAFE, DO YOU THINK *WE* ARE?
IT WAS BETTER *BEFORE*, WASN'T IT? I HEARD IT WAS *NICE* BEFORE.
OH, *YEAH*, IT WAS. PEOPLE USED TO COME FOR US BEFORE AND TAKE US *AWAY*. NOW WE'RE ALL JUST *HERE*.
PEOPLE *TOOK* YOU?!
IT WASN'T LIKE *THAT*. THEY TOOK YOU TO *LOVE* YOU AND *FEED* YOU. AND YOU'D FEEL SAFE AND *WARM*.
MRROWW!
NOT LIKE HERE *AT ALL*.

TITAN WAS A **BAD DOG.**
BUT WE SHOULD REMEMBER WHAT EVEN **HE** SAID BEFORE HE **BETRAYED** US.
I'M GOING TO **READ** IT, SO **YOU** REMEMBER IT.
GOOD BOY!
"I AM NOT THE POUND." HE MEANS **HIM. TITAN.**
HE'S NOT THE POUND.
"NOR ARE **YOU.**" **HE** SAID, RIGHT?
"THE POUND IS NOT **OPEN DOORS.**
"IT IS NOT WALLS, OR THE **YARD,** OR THE BED.
"IT IS NOT **FOOD** IN YOUR BOWL.
NOT TH
D
ARE YOU
THE POUND IS NOT OPEN DOORS.
IT IS NOT FOOD IN YOUR BOWL.
NOT T
E SACR
S ABOVE
"IT IS **NOT** THE LAW.
"OR THE SACRED WORDS **ABOVE** ME.
"THE **POUND** IS THE **DREAM.**
"NOT **MY** DREAM AND NOT **YOURS.**
"NOT EVEN **LUCKY'S.**
"IT IS **OUR** DREAM.
"THE DREAM OF ALL **FREE** ANIMALS."
YEAH.

After the death of Titan, despite Piggy's speech, even the dogs were upset.
WILL RE
And the more rebellious of them spent nights howling and growling, demanding an explanation for the execution.
Piggy, never the bravest of pups, locked himself into the cam room with a few of his most loyal guard dogs.
KEEP OUT
He shifted between moods, back and forth, sometimes whining, sometimes ranting.
Rumors abounded that he didn't even leave the room to defecate.
Many pups took breaks from their prolonged yelping to laugh at the great leader's lack of house training.
Finally, Piggy labeled the ongoing dog racket "an unlawful rebellion."
He declared another state of emergency.
(Though it was unclear if the last state of emergency had yet ended.)
LOST & FOUND
ADOPTION
To quell the protests before "more violence" broke out in the pound, Piggy diverted funds from the Kitten Cam to hire more men.
He announced that such an action was regrettable, but claimed the blame for these steps lay entirely with the dogs who would not listen.
CLIK
In the end, what choice did he have?

The men invited inside worked quickly.
SECURITY
SECURITY
All dogs were now required to be crated when not accompanied by a human handler.
Even Piggy's guard dogs were subject to this ruling.
He was heard saying that if Titan could betray the pound, anyone could.
Though there was one obvious exception to this new canine rule...
...as Piggy himself remained free to patrol the pound.
"The one remaining good dog," he was known to mutter.
Freedom, however, is not an easy burden to bear.
And the Leader preferred on the whole to remain in the Kitten Cam room.
There he could continue to garner the attention of the world.
And there he could earn the money needed to pay for the men now securing his leadership of the pound.
As he told everyone...
...he was still such a big hit.

Of course, it wouldn't be fair to just lock the dogs in their cages and leave the other animals roaming free in their spaces.
After all, the core principle of the pound was equality.
And so Piggy gave the order for the men to round up the cats (and the few rabbits still alive) and place them appropriately back in their cells.
Despite the common cliché, the men found the cat herding to be fairly simple.
Most felines had resigned themselves to this eventual fate; some hoped it might lead to a new, better world.
The rabbits on the whole were even eager to be locked away.
For it offered some protection against their predation.
Madame Fifi herself did not put up a fight, not even a scratch.
She merely went limp, the bones seemingly slipping out of her body.
She closed her eyes and slept.
The most natural thing in the world.

Weeks, months, years passed.
As the cats were known to say, it is difficult to tell time when you rarely see the sun.
Madame Fifi measured her life mostly in her hunger, or lack thereof.
The less she ate, the farther she was from her days as a kitten, looking down on Lucky, hearing his words.
After the return of the caging, little changed.
Or if anything did, she didn't notice.
Her focus was on her rest and it required a great deal of her effort.
Later, after her fur inexplicably began to stink, a man came to her pen...
...and opened her door.
He picked her up gently, and she was reminded of her mother years and years ago.
How she would dangle from the teeth of that feral animal and feel perfectly content.
The human put her into a carrier...
MROWW
...and closed the door.

Fifi had not left the cat room in ages.
As she entered the main hall, she was shocked at how different it looked.
Or, rather, how different it once looked. For a little while.
The words were gone.
The men were at their tables doing their business.
The animals were locked away.
All that was, was again.
Fifi thought of Lucky and his dream.
Of Titan and his dignity.
Of Hercules and Barron and Tiger and Mutt and the other leaders.
She thought of all the cats and all the dogs and all the rabbits, and all of them free as the birds in the sky.
DOGS
CATS
MANSFIELD
Then she thought of Raven.
Of the black cat in the dark.
He too had a dream, she remembered now.

Then, as she was carried down the hall, she raised her head slightly and saw an animal upon whom she had hoped not to spend a hair of consideration.
On this, her final trip through the pound.
Nonetheless, there he was, as ever, tragically unignored.
SHAKE?
CAN YOU *SHAKE.*
NNNN NNNN
Fifi looked from man to pet, and from pet to man again.
GOOD BOY, SSHUSCH A *GOOD* BOY! WHOSHH A GOOD BOY?!
How easy it was to say which was which.
ANIM
DISPO
HEE HEE.

THE END

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ANIMAL
POUND

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ANIMAL POUND

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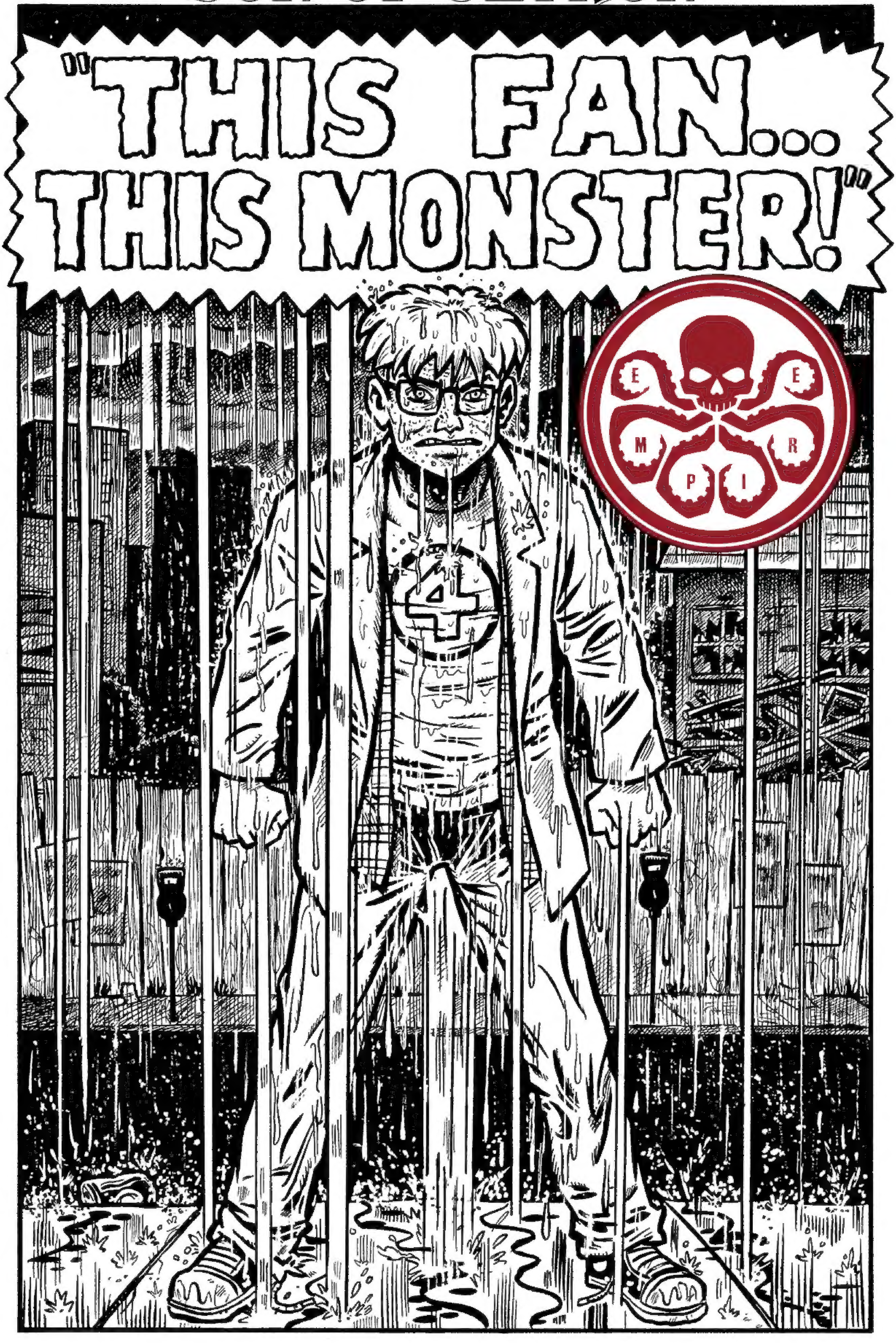
Clayton Cowles is an Eisner and Ringo-nominated letterer who's currently working for every major comic book publisher. He lives in upstate New York in a house with two cats. There is no question that Tom King is his most frequent collaborator.

SON OF ULTRON


"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"
E M P I R E